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VIEWS AND REVIEWS

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

BY

HENRY JAMES

NOW FIRST COLLECTED

INTRODUCTION BY

LE ROY PHILLIPS

COMPILER OF

"A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WRITINGS OF HENRY JAMES"

BOSTON

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1908

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INTRODUCTION

Those whose palates are accustomed to the subtle flavours of the wines of the Rhine and Moselle can smack their lips and name the vintage at the first taste. Likewise any one fairly familiar with the work of Mr. James during his forty years of literary activity can, after the reading of a single page taken at random, judge with a remarkable accuracy the date of its composition. Yet the transition has not been abrupt and the styles of writing which the author has adopted, early, middle and late, have blended in such a way that he has been bringing many of his earlier readers, though some have fallen by the wayside, along with him to a genuine appreciation of his present work.

It is not unnatural but disappointing that those of the present generation who chance to meet Mr. James in one of the later novels are not as likely to seek a second volume as those who read Daisy Miller *some thirty years ago when that study first appeared, so fresh in its note of charm and pathos, in the now almost unfindable brown wrappers of*

45790

Harper's Half Hour Series, for they may forever miss a rare enjoyment.

In the critical papers which make up the contents of this book, the characteristics of the author's later style are wholly absent. Without the date of the original appearance of these essays in periodical form being indicated, the chronological setting of this work is apparent. No sentences with marvelously intricate complications of construction and with expressions involved are in the author's method at this time, while for clearness and charm these views and reviews are admirable specimens, showing qualities which brought Mr. James his early readers and first made his name an essential feature of the announcements of publishers of the more discriminating periodicals forty years ago.

The earliest authenticated magazine article by Mr. James — printed when he was twenty-one — is a critical notice of Nassau W. Senior's Essays on Fiction *in* The North American Review *for October, 1864. From this time until the appearance of his first volume —* A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales, *Boston: 1875 — as many as one hundred and twenty-five serious literary notices contributed to periodicals can be traced to him.*

During this period it must also be remembered that Mr. James was equally employed in writing short stories, art criticism and notes of travel, both

at home and abroad, and that these were also distinctive features of the widely scattered journals in which they appeared.

In The North American Review, The Atlantic Monthly, The Galaxy, Lippincott's Magazine, The New York Tribune, The Independent *and some other periodicals, the authorship of such work was attributed to Mr. James on the publication of the articles or in regularly issued indexes.*

The articles in The Nation *are seldom signed, and there is no published index showing the contributors to its files. In preparing a recent* [1] *Bibliography of the writings of Henry James I had access to a record which the late Wendell Phillips Garrison, who was Mr. Godkin's associate from the founding of the paper and after 1881 editor in charge until June 28, 1906, had carefully kept of every author's work which his paper had published since its first issue. The amount of matter which Mr. James had provided, and the variety of interests concerning which he wrote, made an amazing array of notes. It is from the early issues of* The Nation *that much of the contents of this volume is reprinted. Of Mr. James's contributions to periodicals those to this paper were perhaps the most notable as well as the most frequent. He was*

[1] *A Bibliography of the Writings of Henry James. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906.*

represented in its first number — July 6, 1865 — by some critical notes on Henry W. Kingsley's novel, "The Hillyars and the Bartons: A Story of Two Families," *under the title,* "The Noble School of Fiction," *and the name* "*Henry James*" *appears in the publisher's announced list of contributors to the early volumes. Many of these papers which first appeared in* The Nation *have been reprinted, but few readers at this distance can realize how much the esteem in which that journal was immediately held under the editorial supervision of Mr. Godkin was due to perhaps its youngest regular contributor.*

Volumes of the collected critical papers have already appeared, — French Poets and Novelists, London: *1878, and* Partial Portraits, *London: 1888, are the more notable, — but by far the greater part of these contemporary Essays on the literature of the late sixties and the seventies are now almost lost in the files of old or extinct periodicals.*

We are accustomed these later years to think of Mr. James as novelist rather than literary essayist and he has been cited by a recent writer as an author of fiction who becomes a critic on occasion and, he also adds, that his analytical system of novel writing excellently fits him for the office of critic; but, on the contrary, the papers in this volume seem to show that his early self-training as a

critic has been the preparation for the creation of his characters in fiction.

The true lover of Mr. James's work feels the same delightful sense of intimate discovery in touching these early papers that an artist does in finding a portfolio of early sketches by a beloved master whose developed power and strength is known to him. There is the recognition of the characteristic touch even here — the insight, the thought within a thought, (more lately the despair of privileged psychologic athletes), the mystery of seeing — not what is apparent to the outward eye but what we fancied we concealed successfully within our inmost selves. There is the extraordinary sense of his having put on paper what we really thought — what we now think — that gives us more faith than ever in our artist who is expression for us who feel, but who are yet dumb.

LE ROY PHILLIPS.

Boston, April 10, 1908.

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THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly,* October, 1866.

This essay was written in 1866 before *Middlemarch* or *Daniel Deronda* had appeared. The former work was published in 1871–72 and the latter book in 1876. It was afterwards discussed at length by Mr. James in "Daniel Deronda: a Conversation," originally contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly,* December, 1876, and reprinted in 1888 in *Partial Portraits.*

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

THE critic's first duty in the presence of an author's collective works is to seek out some key to his method, some utterance of his literary convictions, some indication of his ruling theory. The amount of labour involved in an inquiry of this kind will depend very much upon the author. In some cases the critic will find express declarations; in other cases he will have to content himself with conscientious inductions. In a writer so fond of digressions as George Eliot, he has reason to expect that broad evidences of artistic faith will not be wanting. He finds in *Adam Bede* the following passage:—

"Paint us an angel if you can, with a floating violet robe and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward, and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory; but do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands,—those heavy clowns taking holiday

in a dingy pot-house,—those rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world,—those homes with their tin cans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their clusters of onions. In this world there are so many of these common, coarse people, who have no picturesque, sentimental wretchedness. It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes. . . .

"There are few prophets in the world,—few sublimely beautiful women,—few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities; I want a great deal of those feelings for my every-day fellowmen, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude, whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy. . . .

"I herewith discharge my conscience," our author continues, "and declare that I have had quite enthusiastic movements of admiration toward old gentlemen who spoke the worst English, who were occasionally fretful in their temper, and who had never moved in a higher sphere of influence than that of parish overseer; and that the way in which I have come to the conclusion that human nature is loveable—the way I have learnt something of

its deep pathos, its sublime mysteries—has been by living a great deal among people more or less commonplace and vulgar, of whom you would perhaps hear nothing very surprising if you were to inquire about them in the neighbourhoods where they dwelt."

But even in the absence of any such avowed predilections as these, a brief glance over the principal figures of her different works would assure us that our author's sympathies are with common people. Silas Marner is a linen-weaver, Adam Bede is a carpenter, Maggie Tulliver is a miller's daughter, Felix Holt is a watchmaker, Dinah Morris works in a factory, and Hetty Sorrel is a dairymaid. Esther Lyon, indeed, is a daily governess; but Tito Melema alone is a scholar. In the *Scenes of Clerical Life,* the author is constantly slipping down from the clergymen, her heroes, to the most ignorant and obscure of their parishioners. Even in *Romola* she consecrates page after page to the conversation of the Florentine populace. She is as unmistakably a painter of *bourgeois* life as Thackeray was a painter of the life of drawing-rooms.

Her opportunities for the study of the manners of the solid lower classes have evidently been very great. We have her word for it that she has lived much among the farmers, mechanics, and small traders of that central region of England which she has made known to us under the name of Loam-

shire. The conditions of the popular life in this district in that already distant period to which she refers the action of most of her stories—the end of the last century and the beginning of the present—were so different from any that have been seen in America, that an American, in treating of her books, must be satisfied not to touch upon the question of their accuracy and fidelity as pictures of manners and customs. He can only say that they bear strong internal evidence of truthfulness.

If he is a great admirer of George Eliot, he will indeed be tempted to affirm that they *must* be true. They offer a completeness, a rich density of detail, which could be the fruit only of a long term of conscious contact,—such as would make it much more difficult for the author to fall into the perversion and suppression of facts, than to set them down literally. It is very probable that her colours are a little too bright, and her shadows of too mild a gray, that the sky of her landscapes is too sunny, and their atmosphere too redolent of peace and abundance. Local affection may be accountable for half of this excess of brilliancy; the author's native optimism is accountable for the other half.

I do not remember, in all her novels, an instance of gross misery of any kind not directly caused by the folly of the sufferer. There are no

pictures of vice or poverty or squalor. There are no rags, no gin, no brutal passions. That average humanity which she favours is very *borné* in intellect, but very genial in heart, as a glance at its representatives in her pages will convince us. In *Adam Bede,* there is Mr. Irwine, the vicar, with avowedly no qualification for his profession, placidly playing chess with his mother, stroking his dogs, and dipping into Greek tragedies; there is the excellent Martin Poyser at the Farm, good-natured and rubicund; there is his wife, somewhat too sharply voluble, but only in behalf of cleanliness and honesty and order; there is Captain Donnithorne at the Hall, who does a poor girl a mortal wrong, but who is, after all, such a nice, good-looking fellow; there are Adam and Seth Bede, the carpenter's sons, the strongest, purest, most discreet of young rustics. The same broad felicity prevails in *The Mill on the Floss.* Mr. Tulliver, indeed, fails in business; but his failure only serves as an offset to the general integrity and prosperity. His son is obstinate and wilful; but it is all on the side of virtue. His daughter is somewhat sentimental and erratic; but she is more conscientious yet.

Conscience, in the classes from which George Eliot recruits her figures, is a universal gift. Decency and plenty and good-humour follow contentedly in its train. The word which sums up

the common traits of our author's various groups is the word *respectable.* Adam Bede is pre-eminently a respectable young man; so is Arthur Donnithorne; so, although he will persist in going without a cravat, is Felix Holt. So, with perhaps the exception of Maggie Tulliver and Stephen Guest, is every important character to be found in our author's writings. They all share this fundamental trait,—that in each of them passion proves itself feebler than conscience.

The first work which made the name of George Eliot generally known, contains, to my perception, only a small number of the germs of her future power. From the *Scenes of Clerical Life* to *Adam Bede* she made not so much a step as a leap. Of the three tales contained in the former work, I think the first is much the best. It is short, broadly descriptive, humourous, and exceedingly pathetic. "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" are fortunes which clever story-tellers with a turn for pathos, from Oliver Goldsmith downward, have found of very good account, —the fortunes of a hapless clergyman of the Church of England in daily contention with the problem how upon eighty pounds a year to support a wife and six children in all due ecclesiastical gentility.

"Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," the second of the tales in question, I cannot hesitate to pronounce

a failure. George Eliot's pictures of drawing-room life are only interesting when they are linked or related to scenes in the tavern parlour, the dairy, and the cottage. Mr. Gilfil's love-story is enacted entirely in the drawing-room, and in consequence it is singularly deficient in force and reality. Not that it is vulgar,—for our author's good taste never forsakes her,—but it is thin, flat, and trivial. But for a certain family likeness in the use of language and the rhythm of the style, it would be hard to believe that these pages are by the same hand as *Silas Marner.*

In "Janet's Repentance," the last and longest of the three clerical stories, we return to middle life,—the life represented by the Dodsons in *The Mill on the Floss.* The subject of this tale might almost be qualified by the French epithet *scabreux.* It would be difficult for what is called *realism* to go further than in the adoption of a heroine stained with the vice of intemperance. The theme is unpleasant; the author chose it at her peril. It must be added, however, that Janet Dempster has many provocations. Married to a brutal drunkard, she takes refuge in drink against his ill-usage; and the story deals less with her lapse into disgrace than with her redemption, through the kind offices of the Reverend Edgar Tryan,—by virtue of which, indeed, it takes its place in the clerical series. I cannot help thinking that the stern and tragical

character of the subject has been enfeebled by the over-diffuseness of the narrative and the excess of local touches. The abundance of the author's recollections and observations of village life clogs the dramatic movement, over which she has as yet a comparatively slight control. In her subsequent works the stouter fabric of the story is better able to support this heavy drapery of humour and digression.

To a certain extent, I think *Silas Marner* holds a higher place than any of the author's works. It is more nearly a masterpiece; it has more of that simple, rounded, consummate aspect, that absence of loose ends and gaping issues, which marks a classical work. What was attempted in it, indeed, was within more immediate reach than the heart-trials of Adam Bede and Maggie Tulliver. A poor, dull-witted, disappointed Methodist cloth-weaver; a little golden-haired foundling child; a well-meaning, irresolute country squire, and his patient, childless wife;—these, with a chorus of simple, beer-loving villagers, make up the *dramatis personae.* More than any of its brother-works, *Silas Marner,* I think, leaves upon the mind a deep impression of the grossly material life of agricultural England in the last days of the old *régime,* —the days of full-orbed Toryism, of Trafalgar and of Waterloo, when the invasive spirit of

French domination threw England back upon a sense of her own insular solidity, and made her for the time doubly, brutally, morbidly English. Perhaps the best pages in the work are the first thirty, telling the story of poor Marner's disappointments in friendship and in love, his unmerited disgrace, and his long, lonely twilight-life at Raveloe, with the sole companionship of his loom, in which his muscles moved "with such even repetition, that their pause seemed almost as much a constraint as the holding of his breath."

Here, as in all George Eliot's books, there is a middle life and a low life; and here, as usual, I prefer the low life. In *Silas Marner,* in my opinion, she has come nearest the mildly rich tints of brown and gray, the mellow lights and the undreadful corner-shadows of the Dutch masters whom she emulates. One of the chapters contains a scene in a pot-house, which frequent reference has made famous. Never was a group of honest, garrulous village simpletons more kindly and humanely handled. After a long and somewhat chilling silence, amid the pipes and beer, the landlord opens the conversation "by saying in a doubtful tone to his cousin the butcher:—

" 'Some folks 'ud say that was a fine beast you druv in yesterday, Bob?'

"The butcher, a jolly, smiling, red-haired man,

was not disposed to answer rashly. He gave a few puffs before he spat, and replied, 'And they wouldn't be fur wrong, John.'

"After this feeble, delusive thaw, silence set in as severely as before.

" 'Was it a red Durham?' said the farrier, taking up the thread of discourse after the lapse of a few minutes.

"The farrier looked at the landlord, and the landlord looked at the butcher, as the person who must take the responsibility of answering.

" 'Red it was,' said the butcher, in his good-humoured husky treble,—'and a Durham it was.'

" 'Then you needn't tell me who you bought it of,' said the farrier, looking round with some triumph; 'I know who it is has got the red Durhams o' this country-side. And she'd a white star on her brow, I'll bet a penny?'

" 'Well; yes—she might,' said the butcher, slowly, considering that he was giving a decided affirmation. 'I don't say contrairy.'

" 'I knew that very well,' said the farrier, throwing himself back defiantly; 'if I don't know Mr. Lammeter's cows, I should like to know who does, —that's all. And as for the cow you bought, bargain or no bargain, I've been at the drenching of her,—contradick me who will.'

"The farrier looked fierce, and the mild butcher's conversational spirit was roused a little.

" 'I'm not for contradicking no man,' he said; 'I'm for peace and quietness. Some are for cutting long ribs. I'm for cutting 'em short myself; but *I* don't quarrel with 'em. All I say is, it's a lovely carkiss,—and anybody as was reasonable, it'ud bring tears into their eyes to look at it.'

" 'Well, it's the cow as I drenched, whatever it is,' pursued the farrier, angrily; 'and it was Mr. Lammeter's cow, else you told a lie when you said it was a red Durham.'

" 'I tell no lies,' said the butcher, with the same mild huskiness as before; 'and I contradick none, —not if a man was to swear himself black; he's no meat of mine, nor none of my bargains. All I say is, it's a lovely carkiss. And what I say I'll stick to; but I'll quarrel wi' no man.'

" 'No,' said the farrier, with bitter sarcasm, looking at the company generally; 'and p'rhaps you didn't say the cow was a red Durham; and p'rhaps you didn't say she'd got a star on her brow,—stick to that, now you are at it.' "

Matters having come to this point, the landlord interferes *ex officio* to preserve order. The Lammeter family having come up, he discreetly invites Mr. Macey, the parish clerk and tailor, to favour the company with his recollections on the subject. Mr. Macey, however, "smiled pityingly in answer to the landlord's appeal, and said: 'Ay, ay; I know, I know: but I let other folks talk. I've laid

by now, and gev up to the young uns. Ask them as have been to school at Tarley: they've learn't pernouncing; that's came up since my day.' ''

Mr. Macey is nevertheless persuaded to dribble out his narrative; proceeding by instalments, and questioned from point to point, in a kind of Socratic manner, by the landlord. He at last arrives at Mr. Lammeter's marriage, and how the clergyman, when he came to put the questions, inadvertently transposed the position of the two essential names, and asked, ''Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded wife?'' etc.

'' 'But the partic'larest thing of all,' pursues Mr. Macey, 'is, as nobody took any notice on it but me, and they answered straight off ''Yes,'' like as if it had been me saying ''Amen'' i' the right place, without listening to what went before.'

'' 'But *you* knew what was going on well enough, didn't you, Mr. Macey? You were live enough, eh?' said the butcher.

'' 'Yes, bless you!' said Mr. Macey, pausing, and smiling in pity at the impatience of his hearer's imagination,—'why, I was all of a tremble; it was as if I'd been a coat pulled by two tails, like; for I couldn't stop the parson, I couldn't take upon me to do that; and yet I said to myself, I says, ''Suppose they shouldn't be fast married,'' 'cause the words are contrairy, and my head

went working like a mill, for I was always uncommon for turning things over and seeing all round 'em; and I says to myself, "Is't the meaning or the words as makes folks fast i' wedlock?" For the parson meant right, and the bride and bridegroom meant right. But then, when I came to think on it, meaning goes but a little way i' most things, for you may mean to stick things together and your glue may be bad, and then where are you?' "

Mr. Macey's doubts, however, are set at rest by the parson after the service, who assures him that what does the business is neither the meaning nor the words, but the register. Mr. Macey then arrives at the chapter—or rather is gently inducted thereunto by his hearers—of the ghosts who frequent certain of the Lammeter stables. But ghosts threatening to prove as pregnant a theme of contention as Durham cows, the landlord again meditates: " 'There's folks i' my opinion, they can't see ghos'es, not if they stood as plain as a pikestaff before 'em. And there's reason i' that. For there's my wife, now, can't smell, not if she'd the strongest o' cheese under her nose. I never seed a ghost myself, but then I says to myself, "Very like I haven't the smell for 'em." I mean, putting a ghost for a smell or else contrairiways. And so I'm for holding with both sides. . . . For the smell's what I go by.' "

The best drawn of the village worthies in *Silas Marner* are Mr. Macey, of the scene just quoted, and good Dolly Winthrop, Marner's kindly patroness. I have room for only one more specimen of Mr. Macey. He is looking on at a New Year's dance at Squire Cass's, beside Ben Winthrop, Dolly's husband.

" 'The Squire's pretty springy, considering his weight,' said Mr. Macey, 'and he stamps uncommon well. But Mr. Lammeter beats 'em all for shapes; you see he holds his head like a sodger, and he isn't so cushiony as most o' the oldish gentlefolks,—they run fat in gineral;—and he's got a fine leg. The parson's nimble enough, but he hasn't got much of a leg: it is a bit too thick downward, and his knees might be a bit nearer without damage; but he might do worse, he might do worse. Though he hasn't that grand way o' waving his hand as the Squire has.'

" 'Talk o' nimbleness, look at Mrs. Osgood,' said Ben Winthrop. . . . 'She's the finest made woman as is, let the next be where she will.'

" 'I don't heed how the women are made,' said Mr. Macey, with some contempt. 'They wear nayther coat nor breeches; you can't make much out o' their shapes!' "

Mrs. Winthrop, the wheelwright's wife who, out of the fullness of her charity, comes to comfort Silas in the season of his distress, is in her way one

of the most truthfully sketched of the author's figures. "She was in all respects a woman of scrupulous conscience, so eager for duties that life seemed to offer them too scantily unless she rose at half past four, though this threw a scarcity of work over the more advanced hours of the morning, which it was a constant problem for her to remove. . . . She was a very mild, patient woman, whose nature it was to seek out all the sadder and more serious elements of life and pasture her mind upon them." She stamps I. H. S. on her cakes and loaves without knowing what the letters mean, or indeed without knowing that they are letters, being very much surprised that Marner can "read 'em off,"—chiefly because they are on the pulpit cloth at church. She touches upon religious themes in a manner to make the superficial reader apprehend that she cultivates some polytheistic form of faith,—extremes meet. She urges Marner to go to church, and describes the satisfaction which she herself derives from the performance of her religious duties.

"If you've niver had no church, there 's no telling what good it'll do you. For I feel as set up and comfortable as niver was, when I've been and heard the prayers and the singing to the praise and glory o' God, as Mr. Macey gives out,—and Mr. Crackenthorp saying good words and more partic'lar on Sacramen' day; and if a bit o' trouble

comes, I feel as I can put up wi' it, for I've looked for help i' the right quarter, and giv myself up to Them as we must all give ourselves up to at the last: and if we've done our part, it isn't to be believed as Them as are above us 'ud be worse nor we are, and come short o' Theirn."

"The plural pronoun," says the author, "was no heresy of Dolly's, but only her way of avoiding a presumptuous familiarity." I imagine that there is in no other English novel a figure so simple in its elements as this of Dolly Winthrop, which is so real without being contemptible, and so quaint without being ridiculous.

In all those of our author's books which have borne the name of the hero or heroine,—*Adam Bede, Silas Marner, Romola,* and *Felix Holt,*—the person so put forward has really played a subordinate part. The author may have set out with the intention of maintaining him supreme; but her material has become rebellious in her hands, and the technical hero has been eclipsed by the real one. Tito is the leading figure in *Romola.* The story deals predominantly, not with Romola as affected by Tito's faults, but with Tito's faults as affecting first himself, and incidentally his wife. Godfrey Cass, with his lifelong secret, is by right the hero of *Silas Marner.* Felix Holt, in the work which bears his name, is little more than an oc-

casional apparition; and indeed the novel has no hero, but only a heroine.

The same remark applies to *Adam Bede,* as the work stands. The central figure of the book, by virtue of her great misfortune, is Hetty Sorrel. In the presence of that misfortune no one else, assuredly, has a right to claim dramatic pre-eminence. The one person for whom an approach to equality may be claimed is, not Adam Bede, but Arthur Donnithorne. If the story had ended, as I should have infinitely preferred to see it end, with Hetty's execution, or even with her reprieve, and if Adam had been left to his grief, and Dinah Morris to the enjoyment of that distinguished celibacy for which she was so well suited, then I think Adam might have shared the honours of pre-eminence with his hapless sweetheart. But as it is, the continuance of the book in his interest is fatal to him. His sorrow at Hetty's misfortune is not a *sufficient* sorrow for the situation. That his marriage at some future time was quite possible, and even natural, I readily admit; but that was matter for a new story.

This point illustrates, I think, the great advantage of the much-censured method, introduced by Balzac, of continuing his heroes' adventures from tale to tale. Or, admitting that the author was indisposed to undertake, or even to conceive, in its

completeness, a new tale, in which Adam, healed of his wound by time, should address himself to another woman, I yet hold that it would be possible tacitly to foreshadow some such event at the close of the tale which we are supposing to end with Hetty's death,—to make it the logical consequence of Adam's final state of mind. Of course circumstances would have much to do with bringing it to pass, and these circumstances could not be foreshadowed; but apart from the action of circumstances would stand the fact that, to begin with, the event was *possible.*

The assurance of this possibility is what I should have desired the author to place the sympathetic reader at a stand-point to deduce for himself. In every novel the work is divided between the writer and the reader; but the writer makes the reader very much as he makes his characters. When he makes him ill, that is, makes him different, he does no work; the writer does all. When he makes him well, that is, makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labour. In making such a deduction as I have just indicated, the reader would be doing but his share of the task; the grand point is to get him to make it. I hold that there is a way. It is perhaps a secret; but until it is found out, I think that the art of story-telling cannot be said to have approached perfection.

When you re-read coldly and critically a book

which in former years you have read warmly and carelessly, you are surprised to see how it changes its proportions. It falls away in those parts which have been pre-eminent in your memory, and it increases in the small portions. Until I lately read *Adam Bede* for a second time, Mrs. Poyser was in my mind its representative figure; for I remembered a number of her epigrammatic sallies. But now, after a second reading, Mrs. Poyser is the last figure I think of, and a fresh perusal of her witticisms has considerably diminished their classical flavour. And if I must tell the truth, Adam himself is next to the last, and sweet Dinah Morris third from the last. The person immediately evoked by the title of the work is poor Hetty Sorrel.

Mrs. Poyser is *too* epigrammatic; her wisdom smells of the lamp. I do not mean to say that she is not natural, and that women of her class are not often gifted with her homely fluency, her penetration, and her turn for forcible analogies. But she is too sustained; her morality is too shrill, —too much in *staccato;* she too seldom subsides into the commonplace. Yet it cannot be denied that she puts things very happily. Remonstrating with Dinah Morris on the undue disinterestedness of her religious notions, "But for the matter o' that," she cries, "if everybody was to do like you, the world must come to a stand-still; for if every-

body tried to do without house and home and eating and drinking, and was always talking as we must despise the things o' the world, as you say, I should like to know where the pick of the stock, and the corn, and the best new milk-cheeses 'ud have to go? *Everybody 'ud be wanting to make bread o' tail ends,* and everybody 'ud be running after everybody else to preach to 'em, i'stead o' bringing up their families and laying by against a bad harvest." And when Hetty comes home late from the Chase, and alleges in excuse that the clock at home is so much earlier than the clock at the great house: "What, you'd be wanting the clock set by gentlefolks' time, would you? an' sit up burning candle, and lie a-bed wi' the sun a-bakin' you, like a cowcumber i' the frame?" Mrs. Poyser has something almost of Yankee shrewdness and angularity; but the figure of a New England rural housewife would lack a whole range of Mrs. Poyser's feelings, which, whatever may be its effect in real life, gives its subject in a novel at least a very picturesque richness of colour; the constant sense, namely, of a superincumbent layer of "gentlefolks," whom she and her companions can never raise their heads unduly without hitting.

My chief complaint with Adam Bede himself is that he is too good. He is meant, I conceive, to be every inch a man; but, to my mind, there

are several inches wanting. He lacks spontaneity and sensibility, he is too stiff-backed. He lacks that supreme quality without which a man can never be interesting to men,—the capacity to be tempted. His nature is without richness or responsiveness. I doubt not that such men as he exist, especially in the author's thrice-English Loamshire; she has partially described them as a class, with a felicity which carries conviction. She claims for her hero that, although a plain man, he was as little an ordinary man as he was a genius.

"He was not an average man. Yet such men as he are reared here and there in every generation of our peasant artisans, with an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of faculties trained in skillful, courageous labour; they make their way upward, rarely as geniuses, most commonly as painstaking, honest men, with the skill and conscience to do well the tasks that lie before them. Their lives have no discernible echo beyond the neighbourhood where they dwelt; but you are almost sure to find there some good piece of road, some building, some application of mineral produce, some improvement in farming practice, some reform of parish abuses, with which their names are associated by one or two generations after them. Their employers were

the richer for them; the work of their hands has worn well, and the work of their brains has guided well the hands of other men."

One cannot help feeling thankful to the kindly writer who attempts to perpetuate their memories beyond the generations which profit immediately by their toil. If she is not a great dramatist, she is at least an exquisite describer. But one can as little help feeling that it is no more than a strictly logical retribution, that in her hour of need (dramatically speaking) she should find them indifferent to their duties as heroes. I profoundly doubt whether the central object of a novel may successfully be a passionless creature. The ultimate eclipse, both of Adam Bede and of Felix Holt would seem to justify my question. Tom Tulliver is passionless, and Tom Tulliver lives gratefully in the memory; but this, I take it, is because he is strictly a subordinate figure, and awakens no reaction of feeling on the reader's part by usurping a position which he is not the man to fill.

Dinah Morris is apparently a study from life; and it is warm praise to say, that, in spite of the high key in which she is conceived, morally, she retains many of the warm colours of life. But I confess that it is hard to conceive of a woman so exalted by religious fervour remaining so cool-headed and so temperate. There is in Dinah Morris too close an agreement between her distin-

guished natural disposition and the action of her religious faith. If by nature she had been passionate, rebellious, selfish, I could better understand her actual self-abnegation. I would look upon it as the logical fruit of a profound religious experience. But as she stands, heart and soul go easily hand in hand. I believe it to be very uncommon for what is called a religious conversion merely to intensify and consecrate pre-existing inclinations. It is usually a change, a wrench; and the new life is apt to be the more sincere as the old one had less in common with it. But, as I have said, Dinah Morris bears so many indications of being a reflection of facts well known to the author,—and the phenomena of Methodism, from the frequency with which their existence is referred to in her pages, appear to be so familiar to her, —that I hesitate to do anything but thankfully accept her portrait.

About Hetty Sorrel I shall have no hesitation whatever: I accept her with all my heart. Of all George Eliot's female figures she is the least ambitious, and on the whole, I think, the most successful. The part of the story which concerns her is much the most forcible; and there is something infinitely tragic in the reader's sense of the contrast between the sternly prosaic life of the good people about her, their wholesome decency and their noonday probity, and the dusky sylvan path along which

poor Hetty is tripping, light-footed, to her ruin. Hetty's conduct throughout seems to me to be thoroughly consistent. The author has escaped the easy error of representing her as in any degree made serious by suffering. She is vain and superficial by nature; and she remains so to the end.

As for Arthur Donnithorne, I would rather have had him either better or worse. I would rather have had a little more premeditation before his fault, or a little more repentance after it; that is, while repentance could still be of use. Not that, all things considered, he is not a very fair image of a frank-hearted, well-meaning, careless, self-indulgent young gentleman; but the author has in his case committed the error which in Hetty's she avoided,—the error of showing him as redeemed by suffering. I cannot but think that he was as weak as she. A weak woman, indeed, is weaker than a weak man; but Arthur Donnithorne was a superficial fellow, a person emphatically not to be moved by a shock of conscience into a really interesting and dignified attitude, such as he is made to assume at the close of the book. Why not see things in their nakedness? the impatient reader is tempted to ask. Why not let passions and foibles play themselves out?

It is as a picture, or rather as a series of pictures, that I find *Adam Bede* most valuable. The author succeeds better in drawing attitudes of feel-

ing than in drawing movements of feeling. Indeed, the only attempt at development of character or of purpose in the book occurs in the case of Arthur Donnithorne, where the materials are of the simplest kind. Hetty's lapse into disgrace is not gradual, it is immediate: it is without struggle and without passion. Adam himself has arrived at perfect righteousness when the book opens; and it is impossible to go beyond that. In his case too, therefore, there is no dramatic progression. The same remark applies to Dinah Morris.

It is not in her conceptions nor her composition that George Eliot is strongest: it is in her *touches*. In these she is quite original. She is a good deal of a humourist, and something of a satirist; but she is neither Dickens nor Thackeray. She has over them the great advantage that she is also a good deal of a philosopher; and it is to this union of the keenest observation with the ripest reflection, that her style owes its essential force. She is a thinker,—not, perhaps, a passionate thinker, but at least a serious one; and the term can be applied with either adjective neither to Dickens nor Thackeray. The constant play of lively and vigourous thought about the objects furnished by her observation animates these latter with a surprising richness of colour and a truly human interest. It gives to the author's style, moreover, that lingering, affectionate, comprehensive quality which

is its chief distinction; and perhaps occasionally it makes her tedious. George Eliot is so little tedious, however, because, if, on the one hand, her reflection never flags, so, on the other, her observation never ceases to supply it with material. Her observation, I think, is decidedly of the feminine kind: it deals, in preference, with small things. This fact may be held to explain the excellence of what I have called her pictures, and the comparative feebleness of her dramatic movement.

The contrast here indicated, strong in *Adam Bede*, is most striking in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. The latter work is an admirable tissue of details; but it seems to me quite without character as a composition. It leaves upon the mind no single impression. Felix Holt's radicalism, the pretended motive of the story, is utterly choked amidst a mass of subordinate interests. No representation is attempted of the growth of his opinions, or of their action upon his character; he is marked by the same singular rigidity of outline and fixedness of posture which characterized Adam Bede,—except, perhaps, that there is a certain inclination towards poetry in Holt's attitude. But if the general outline is timid and undecided in *Felix Holt*, the different parts are even richer than in former works. There is no person in the book who attains to triumphant vitality; but there is not a single figure, of however little importance,

that has not caught from without a certain reflection of life. There is a little old waiting-woman to a great lady,—Mrs. Denner by name,—who does not occupy five pages in the story, but who leaves upon the mind a most vivid impression of decent, contented, intelligent, half-stoical servility.

"There were different orders of beings,—so ran Denner's creed,—and she belonged to another order than that to which her mistress belonged. She had a mind as sharp as a needle, and would have seen through and through the ridiculous pretensions of a born servant who did not submissively accept the rigid fate which had given her born superiors. She would have called such pretensions the wrigglings of a worm that tried to walk on its tail. . . . She was a hard-headed, godless little woman, but with a character to be reckoned on as you reckon on the qualities of iron."

"I'm afraid of ever expecting anything good again," her mistress says to her in a moment of depression.

" 'That's weakness, madam. Things don't happen because they are bad or good, else all eggs would be addled or none at all, and at the most it is but six to the dozen. There's good chances and bad chances, and nobody's luck is pulled only by one string. . . . There's a good deal of pleasure in life for you yet.'

"'Nonsense! There's no pleasure for old women. . . . What are your pleasures, Denner, besides being a slave to me?'

"O, there's pleasure in knowing one is not a fool, like half the people one sees about. And managing one's husband is some pleasure, and doing one's business well. Why, if I've only got some orange-flowers to candy, I shouldn't like to die till I see them all right. Then there's the sunshine now and then; I like that, as the cats do. I look upon it life is like our game at whist, when Banks and his wife come to the still-room of an evening. I don't enjoy the game much, but I like to play my cards well, and see what will be the end of it; and I want to see you make the best of your hand, madam, for your luck has been mine these forty years now."

And, on another occasion, when her mistress exclaims, in a fit of distress, that "God was cruel when he made women," the author says:—

"The waiting-woman had none of that awe which could be turned into defiance; the sacred grove was a common thicket to her.

"'It mayn't be good luck to be a woman,' she said. 'But one begins with it from a baby; one gets used to it. And I shouldn't like to be a man,—to cough so loud, and stand straddling about on a wet day, and be so wasteful with meat and drink. *They're a coarse lot, I think.*'"

I should think they were, beside Mrs. Denner.

This glimpse of her is made up of what I have called the author's *touches*. She excels in the portrayal of homely stationary figures for which her well-stored memory furnishes her with types. Here is another touch, in which satire predominates. Harold Transome makes a speech to the electors at Treby.

"Harold's only interruption came from his own party. The oratorical clerk at the Factory, acting as the tribune of the dissenting interest, and feeling bound to put questions, might have been troublesome; *but his voice being unpleasantly sharp, while Harold's was full and penetrating, the questioning was cried down.*"

Of the four English stories, *The Mill on the Floss* seems to me to have most dramatic continuity, in distinction from that descriptive, discursive method of narration which I have attempted to indicate. After Hetty Sorrel, I think Maggie Tulliver the most successful of the author's young women, and after Tito Melema, Tom Tulliver the best of her young men. English novels abound in pictures of childhood; but I know of none more truthful and touching than the early pages of this work. Poor erratic Maggie is worth a hundred of her positive brother, and yet on the very threshold of life she is compelled to accept him as her master. He falls naturally into the man's

privilege of always being in the right. The following scene is more than a reminiscence; it is a real retrospect. Tom and Maggie are sitting upon the bough of an elder-tree, eating jam-puffs. At last only one remains, and Tom undertakes to divide it.

"The knife descended on the puff, and it was in two; but the result was not satisfactory to Tom, for he still eyed the halves doubtfully. At last he said, 'Shut your eyes, Maggie.'

" 'What for?'

" 'You never mind what for,—shut 'em when I tell you.'

"Maggie obeyed.

" 'Now, which'll you have, Maggie, right hand or left?'

" 'I'll have that one with the jam run out,' said Maggie, keeping her eyes shut to please Tom.

" 'Why, you don't like that, you silly. You may have it if it comes to you fair, but I sha'n't give it to you without. Right or left,—you choose now. Ha-a-a!' said Tom, in a tone of exasperation, as Maggie peeped. 'You keep your eyes shut now, else you sha'n't have any.'

"Maggie's power of sacrifice did not extend so far; indeed, I fear she cared less that Tom should enjoy the utmost possible amount of puff, than that he should be pleased with her for giving him the best bit. So she shut her eyes quite close until

Tom told her to 'say which,' and then she said, 'Left hand.'

"'You've got it,' said Tom, in rather a bitter tone.

"'What! the bit with the jam run out?'

"'No; here, take it,' said Tom, firmly, handing decidedly the best piece to Maggie.

"'O, please, Tom, have it; I don't mind,—I like the other; please take this.'

"'No, I sha'n't,' said Tom, almost crossly, beginning on his own inferior piece.

"Maggie, thinking it was of no use to contend further, began too, and ate up her half puff with considerable relish as well as rapidity. But Tom had finished first, and had to look on while Maggie ate her last morsel or two, feeling in himself a capacity for more. *Maggie didn't know Tom was looking at her: she was see-sawing on the elder-bough, lost to everything but a vague sense of jam and idleness.*

"'O, you greedy thing!' said Tom, when she had swallowed the last morsel.''

The portions of the story which bear upon the Dodson family are in their way not unworthy of Balzac; only that, while our author has treated its peculiarities humourously, Balzac would have treated them seriously, almost solemnly. We are reminded of him by the attempt to classify the Dodsons socially in a scientific manner, and to

accumulate small examples of their idiosyncrasies. I do not mean to say that the resemblance is very deep.

The chief defect—indeed, the only serious one—in *The Mill on the Floss* is its conclusion. Such a conclusion is in itself assuredly not illegitimate, and there is nothing in the fact of the flood, to my knowledge, essentially unnatural: what I object to is its relation to the preceding part of the story. The story is told as if it were destined to have, if not a strictly happy termination, at least one within ordinary probabilities. As it stands, the *dénouement* shocks the reader most painfully. Nothing has prepared him for it; the story does not move towards it; it casts no shadow before it. Did such a *dénouement* lie within the author's intentions from the first, or was it a tardy expedient for the solution of Maggie's difficulties? This question the reader asks himself, but of course he asks it in vain.

For my part, although, as long as humanity is subject to floods and earthquakes, I have no objection to see them made use of in novels, I would in this particular case have infinitely preferred that Maggie should have been left to her own devices. I understand the author's scruples, and to a certain degree I respect them. A lonely spinsterhood seemed but a dismal consummation of her generous life; and yet, as the author conceives,

it was unlikely that she would return to Stephen Guest. I respect Maggie profoundly; but nevertheless I ask, Was this after all so unlikely? I will not try to answer the question. I have shown enough courage in asking it. But one thing is certain: a *dénouement* by which Maggie should have called Stephen back would have been extremely interesting, and would have had far more in its favour than can be put to confusion by a mere exclamation of horror.

I have come to the end of my space without speaking of *Romola,* which, as the most important of George Eliot's works, I had kept in reserve. I have only room to say that on the whole I think it *is* decidedly the most important,—not the most entertaining nor the most readable, but the one in which the largest things are attempted and grasped. The figure of Savonarola, subordinate though it is, is a figure on a larger scale than any which George Eliot has elsewhere undertaken; and in the career of Tito Melema there is a fuller representation of the development of a character.

Considerable as are our author's qualities as an artist, and largely as they are displayed in "Romola," the book strikes me less as a work of art than as a work of morals. Like all of George Eliot's works, its dramatic construction is feeble; the story drags and halts,—the setting is too large for the picture; but I remember that, the first

time I read it, I declared to myself that much should be forgiven it for the sake of its generous feeling and its elevated morality. I still recognize this latter fact, but I think I find it more on a level than I at first found it with the artistic conditions of the book.

"Our deeds determine us," George Eliot says somewhere in *Adam Bede,* "as much as we determine our deeds." This is the moral lesson of *Romola.* A man has no associate so intimate as his own character, his own career,—his present and his past; and if he builds up his career of timid and base actions, they cling to him like evil companions, to sophisticate, to corrupt, and to damn him. As in Maggie Tulliver we had a picture of the elevation of the moral tone by honesty and generosity, so that when the mind found itself face to face with the need for a strong muscular effort, it was competent to perform it; so in Tito we have a picture of that depression of the moral tone by falsity and self-indulgence, which gradually evokes on every side of the subject some implacable claim, to be avoided or propitiated. At last all his unpaid debts join issue before him, and he finds the path of life a hideous blind alley.

Can any argument be more plain? Can any lesson be more salutary? "Under every guilty secret," writes the author, with her usual felicity, "there is a hidden brood of guilty wishes, whose

unwholesome, infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires,—the enlistment of self-interest on the side of falsity; as, on the other hand, the purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact, that by it the hope in lies is forever swept away, *and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity.*" And again: "Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character." Somewhere else I think she says, in purport, that our deeds are like our children; we beget them, and rear them and cherish them, and they grow up and turn against us and misuse us.

The fact that has led me to a belief in the fundamental equality between the worth of *Romola* as a moral argument and its value as a work of art, is the fact that in each character it seems to me essentially prosaic. The excellence both of the spirit and of the execution of the book is emphatically an obvious excellence. They make no demand upon the imagination of the reader. It is true of both of them that he who runs may read them. It may excite surprise that I should intimate that George Eliot is deficient in imagination; but I believe that I am right in so doing. Very

readable novels have been written without imagination; and as compared with writers who, like Mr. Trollope, are totally destitute of the faculty, George Eliot may be said to be richly endowed with it. But as compared with writers whom we are tempted to call decidedly imaginative, she must, in my opinion, content herself with the very solid distinction of being exclusively an observer. In confirmation of this I would suggest a comparison of those chapters in *Adam Bede* which treat of Hetty's flight and wanderings, and those of Miss Brontë's *Jane Eyre* which describe the heroine's escape from Rochester's house and subsequent perambulations. The former are throughout admirable prose; the latter are in portions very good poetry.

One word more. Of all the impressions—and they are numerous—which a reperusal of George Eliot's writings has given me, I find the strongest to be this: that (with all deference to *Felix Holt, the Radical*) the author is in morals and æsthetics essentially a conservative. In morals her problems are still the old, passive problems. I use the word "old" with all respect. What moves her most is the idea of a conscience harassed by the memory of slighted obligations. Unless in the case of Savonarola, she has made no attempt to depict a conscience taking upon itself great and novel responsibilities. In her last work, assuredly such

an attempt was—considering the title—conspicuous by its absence.

Of a corresponding tendency in the second department of her literary character,—or perhaps I should say in a certain middle field where morals and æsthetics move in concert,—it is very difficult to give an example. A tolerably good one is furnished by her inclination to compromise with the old tradition—and here I use the word "old" *without* respect—which exacts that a serious story of manners shall close with the factitious happiness of a fairy-tale. I know few things more irritating in a literary way than each of her final chapters,—for even in *The Mill on the Floss* there is a fatal "Conclusion." Both as an artist and a thinker, in other words, our author is an optimist; and although a conservative is not necessarily an optimist, I think an optimist is pretty likely to be a conservative.

ON A DRAMA OF MR. BROWNING

A review of *The Inn Album*, by Robert Browning, London, Smith & Elder; Boston, J. R. Osgood & Co. 1875. Originally published in *The Nation*, January 20, 1876.

ON A DRAMA OF MR. BROWNING

THIS is a decidedly irritating and displeasing performance. It is growing more difficult every year for Mr. Browning's old friends to fight his battles for him, and many of them will feel that on this occasion the cause is really too hopeless, and the great poet must himself be answerable for his indiscretions.

Nothing that Mr. Browning writes, of course, can be vapid; if this were possible, it would be a much simpler affair. If it were a case of a writer "running thin," as the phrase is, there would be no need for criticism; there would be nothing in the way of matter to criticise, and old readers would have no heart to reproach. But it may be said of Mr. Browning that he runs thick rather than thin, and he need claim none of the tenderness granted to those who have used themselves up in the service of their admirers. He is robust and vigorous; more so now, even, than heretofore, and he is more prolific than in the earlier part of his career. But his wantonness, his wilfulness, his crudity, his inexplicable want of secondary thought, as we may call it, of the stage of reflection that

follows upon the first outburst of the idea, and smooths, shapes, and adjusts it—all this alloy of his great genius is more sensible now than ever.

The Inn Album reads like a series of rough notes for a poem—of hasty hieroglyphics and symbols, decipherable only to the author himself. A great poem might perhaps have been made of it, but assuredly it is not a great poem, nor any poem whatsoever. It is hard to say very coherently what it is. Up to a certain point, like everything of Mr. Browning's, it is highly dramatic and vivid and beyond that point, like all its companions, it is as little dramatic as possible. It is not narrative, for there is not a line of comprehensible, consecutive statement in the two hundred and eleven pages of the volume. It is not lyrical, for there is not a phrase which in any degree does the office of the poetry that comes lawfully into the world—chants itself, images itself, or lingers in the memory.

"That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form!" one of the characters exclaims with irresponsible frankness. That Mr. Browning knows he "neglects the form," and does not particularly care, does not very much help matters; it only deepens the reader's sense of the graceless and thankless and altogether unavailable character of the poem. And when we say unavailable, we make the only reproach which is worth addressing to a

writer of Mr. Browning's intellectual power. A poem with so many presumptions in its favour as such an authorship carries with it is a thing to make some intellectual use of, to care for, to remember, to return to, to linger over, to become intimate with. But we can as little imagine a reader (who has not the misfortune to be a reviewer) addressing himself more than once to the perusal of *The Inn Album,* as we fancy cultivating for conversational purposes the society of a person afflicted with a grievous impediment of speech.

Two gentlemen have been playing cards all night in an inn-parlour, and the peep of day finds one of them ten thousand pounds in debt to the other. The tables have been turned, and the victim is the actual victor. The elder man is a dissolute and penniless nobleman, who has undertaken the social education of the aspiring young heir of a great commercial fortune, and has taught him so well that the once ingenuous lad knows more than his clever master. The young man has come down into the country to see his cousin, who lives, hard by at the Hall, with her aunt, and with whom his aristocratic preceptor recommends him, for good worldly reasons, to make a match.

Infinite discourse, of that formidable full-charged sort that issues from the lips of all Mr. Browning's characters, follows the play, and as the morning advances the two gentlemen leave the

inn and go for a walk. Lord K. has meanwhile related to his young companion the history of one of his own earlier loves—how he had seduced a magnificent young woman, and she had fairly frightened him into offering her marriage. On learning that he had meant to go free if he could, her scorn for him becomes such that she rejects his offer of reparation (a very fine stroke) and enters into wedlock with a "smug, crop-haired, smooth-chinned sort of curate-creature." The young man replies that he himself was once in love with a person that quite answers to this description, and then the companions separate—the pupil to call at the Hall, and the preceptor to catch the train for London.

The reader is then carried back to the inn-parlour, into which, on the departure of the gentlemen, two ladies have been ushered. One of them is the young man's cousin, who is playing at cross-purposes with her suitor; the other is her intimate friend, arrived on a flying visit. The intimate friend is of course the ex-victim of Lord K. The ladies have much conversation— all of it rather more ingeniously inscrutable than that of their predecessors; it terminates in the exit of the cousin and the entrance of the young man. He recognizes the curate's wife as the object of his own stifled affection, and the two have, as the French say, an *intime* conversation.

At last Lord K. comes back, having missed his train, and finds himself confronted with his stormy mistress. Very stormy she proves to be, and her outburst of renewed indignation and irony contains perhaps the most successful writing in the poem. Touched by the lady's eloquence, the younger man, who has hitherto professed an almost passionate admiration for his companion, begins to see him in a less interesting light, and in fact promptly turns and reviles him. The situation is here extremely dramatic. Lord K. is a cynic of a sneaking pattern, but he is at any rate a man of ideas. He holds the destiny of his adversaries in his hands, and, snatching up the inn album (which has been knocking about the table during the foregoing portions of the narrative), he scrawls upon it his ultimatum. Let the lady now bestow her affection on his companion, and let the latter accept this boon as a vicarious payment of the gambling debt, otherwise Lord K. will enlighten the lady's husband as to the extent of her acquaintance with himself.

He presents the open page to the heroine, who reads it aloud, and for an answer her younger and more disinterested lover, "with a tiger-flash yell, spring, and scream," throws himself on the insulter, half an hour since, his guide, philosopher, and friend, and, by some means undescribed by Mr. Browning puts an end to his life. This inci-

dent is related in two pregnant lines, which, judged by the general standard of style of the *Inn Album,* must be considered fine:

> "A tiger-flash, yell, spring and scream: halloo!
> Death's out and on him, has and holds him — ugh!"

The effect is of course augmented if the reader is careful to make the "ugh!" rhyme correctly with the "halloo!" The lady takes poison, which she carries on her person and which operates instantaneously, and the young man's cousin, re-entering the room, has a sufficiently tremendous surprise.

The whole picture indefinably appeals to the imagination. There is something very curious about it and even rather arbitrary, and the reader wonders how it came, in the poet's mind, to take exactly that shape. It is very much as if he had worked backwards, had seen his dénouement first, as a mere picture—the two corpses in the inn-parlour, and the young man and his cousin confronted above them—and then had traced back the possible motives and sources. In looking for these Mr. Browning has of course encountered a vast number of deep discriminations and powerful touches of portraitures. He deals with human character as a chemist with his acids and alkalies, and while he mixes his coloured fluids in a way that surprises the profane, knows perfectly well what he is about.

But there is too apt to be in his style that hiss and sputter and evil aroma which characterise the proceedings of the laboratory. The idea, with Mr. Browning, always tumbles out into the world in some grotesque hind-foremost manner; it is like an unruly horse backing out of his stall, and stamping and plunging as he comes. His thought knows no simple stage—at the very moment of its birth it is a terribly complicated affair.

We frankly confess, at the risk of being accused of deplorable levity of mind, that we have found this want of clearness of explanation, of continuity, of at least superficial verisimilitude, of the smooth, the easy, the agreeable, quite fatal to our enjoyment of *The Inn Album*. It is all too argumentative, too curious and recondite. The people talk too much in long set speeches, at a moment's notice, and the anomaly so common in Browning, that the talk of the women is even more rugged and insoluble than that of the men, is here greatly exaggerated. We are reading neither prose nor poetry; it is too real for the ideal, and too ideal for the real. The author of *The Inn Album* is not a writer to whom we care to pay trivial compliments, and, it is not a trivial complaint to say that his book is only barely comprehensible. Of a successful dramatic poem one ought to be able to say more.

SWINBURNE'S ESSAYS

A review of *Essays and Studies*, by Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Chatto & Windus, 1875. Originally published in *The Nation*, July 29, 1875.

SWINBURNE'S ESSAYS

MR. SWINBURNE has by this time impressed upon the general public a tolerably vivid image of his literary personality. His line is a definite one; his note is familiar, and we know what to expect from him. He was at pains, indeed, a year ago to quicken the apprehension of American readers by an effusion directed more or less explicitly to themselves. This piece of literature was brief, but it was very remarkable. Mr. Emerson had had occasion to speak of Mr. Swinburne with qualified admiration and this circumstance, coming to Mr. Swinburne's ears, had prompted him to uncork on the spot the vials of his wrath. He addressed to a newspaper a letter of which it is but a colourless account to say that it embodied the very hysterics of gross vituperation.

Mr. Swinburne has some extremely just remarks about Byron's unamenableness to quotation, his having to be taken in the gross. This is almost equally true of our author himself; he must be judged by all he has done, and we must allow, in our judgment, the weight he would obviously claim for it to his elaborate tribute to the genius of Mr.

Emerson. His tone has two distinct notes—the note of measureless praise and the note of furious denunciation. Each is in need of a correction, but we confess that, with all its faults, we prefer the former. That Mr. Swinburne has a kindness for his more restrictive strain is, however, very obvious. He is over-ready to sound it, and he is not particular about his pretext.

Some people, he says, for instance, affirm that a writer may have a very effective style, yet have nothing of value to express with it. Mr. Swinburne demands that they prove their assertion. "This flattering unction the very foolishest of malignants will hardly, in this case (that of Mr. D. G. Rossetti), be able to lay upon the corrosive sore which he calls his soul; the ulcer of ill-will must rot unrelieved by the rancid ointment of such fiction." In Mr. W. M. Rossetti's edition of Shelley there is in a certain line, an interpolation of the word "autumn." "For the conception of this atrocity the editor is not responsible; for its adoption he is. A thousand years of purgatorial fire would be insufficient expiation for the criminal on whose deaf and desperate head must rest the original guilt of defacing the text of Shelley with this most damnable corruption."

The essays before us are upon Victor Hugo, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, Matthew Arnold as a poet, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, and John Ford.

To these are added two papers upon pictures—the drawings of the old masters at Florence and the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1868. Mr. Swinburne, in writing of poets, cannot fail to say a great many felicitous things. His own insight into the poetic mystery is so deep, his perception in matters of language so refined, his power of appreciation so large and active, his imagination, especially, so sympathetic and flexible, that we constantly feel him to be one who has a valid right to judge and pass sentence. The variety of his sympathies in poetry is especially remarkable, and is in itself a pledge of criticism of a liberal kind. Victor Hugo is his divinity—a divinity whom indeed, to our sense, he effectually conceals and obliterates in the suffocating fumes of his rhetoric. On the other hand, one of the best papers in the volume is a disquisition on the poetry of Mr. Matthew Arnold, of which his relish seems hardly less intense and for whom he states the case with no less prodigious a redundancy of phrase.

Matthew Arnold's canons of style, we should have said, are a positive negation of those of Mr. Swinburne's, and it is to the credit of the latter's breadth of taste that he should have entered into an intellectual temperament which is so little his own. The other articles contain similar examples of his vivacity and energy of perception, and offer a number of happy judgments and suggestive ob-

servations. His estimate of Byron as a poet (not in the least as a man—on this point his utterances are consummately futile) is singularly discriminating; his measurement of Shelley's lyric force is eloquently adequate; his closing words upon John Ford are worth quoting as a specimen of strong apprehension and solid statement. Mr. Swinburne is by no means always solid, and this passage represents him at his best:—

"No poet is less forgettable than Ford; none fastens (as it were) the fangs of his genius and his will more deeply in your memory. You cannot shake hands with him and pass him by; you cannot fall in with him and out again at pleasure; if he touch you once he takes you, and what he takes he keeps his hold of; his work becomes a part of your thought and parcel of your spiritual furniture for ever; he signs himself upon you as with a seal of deliberate and decisive power. His force is never the force of accident; the casual divinity of beauty which falls, as though direct from heaven, upon stray lines and phrases of some poets, falls never by any such heavenly chance on his; his strength of impulse is matched by his strength of will; he never works more by instinct than by resolution; he knows what he would have and what he will do, and gains his end and does his work with full conscience of purpose and insistence of design. By the might of a great will seconded by the

force of a great hand he won the place he holds against all odds of rivalry in a race of rival giants."

On the other hand, Mr. Swinburne is constantly liable on this same line to lapse into flagrant levity and perversity of taste; as in saying that he cannot consider Wordsworth "as mere poet" equal to Coleridge as mere poet; in speaking of Alfred de Musset as "the female page or attendant dwarf" of Byron, and his poems as "decoctions of watered Byronism"; or in alluding jauntily and *en passant* to Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as "the most perfect and exquisite book of modern times."

To note, however, the points at which Mr. Swinburne's judgment hits the mark, or the points at which it misses it, is comparatively superfluous, inasmuch as both of these cases seem to us essentially accidental. His book is not at all a book of judgment; it is a book of pure imagination. His genius is for style simply, and not in the least for thought nor for real analysis; he goes through the motions of criticism, and makes a considerable show of logic and philosophy, but with deep appreciation his writing seems to us to have very little to do.

He is an imaginative commentator, often of a very splendid kind, but he is never a real interpreter and rarely a trustworthy guide. He is a writer, and a writer in constant quest of a theme. He has an inordinate sense of the picturesque, and

he finds his theme in those subjects and those writers which gratify it. When they gratify it highly, he conceives a boundless relish for them; they give him his chance, and he turns-on the deluge of his exorbitant homage. His imagination kindles, he abounds in their own sense, when they give him an inch he takes an ell, and quite loses sight of the subject in the entertainment he finds in his own word-spinning. In this respect he is extraordinarily accomplished: he very narrowly misses having a magnificent style. On the imaginative side, his style is almost complete, and seems capable of doing everything that picturesqueness demands. There are few writers of our day who could have produced this description of a thunderstorm at sea. Mr. Swinburne gives it to us as the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius:—

"About midnight, the thundercloud was full overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkening so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life. At the same hour, the sky was clear to the west, and all along the sea-line there sprang and sank as to music a restless dance or chase of summer lightnings across the lower sky: a race and riot of lights, beautiful and rapid as a course of shining Oceanides along the tremulous floor of the sea. Eastward, at the same moment, the space of clear sky was higher and

wider, a splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue; it was of no colour nameable by man; and midway in it, between the stars and the sea, hung the motionless full moon; Artemis watching with serene splendour of scorn the battle of Titans and the revel of nymphs from her stainless and Olympian summit of divine indifferent light. Underneath and about us, the sea was paved with flame; the whole water trembled and hissed with phosphoric fire; even through the wind and thunder I could hear the crackling and sputtering of the water-sparks. In the same heaven and in the same hour there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of moonlight, and of the double lightning, forked and sheet; and under all this miraculous heaven lay a flaming floor of water."

But with this extravagant development of the imagination there is no commensurate development either of the reason or of the moral sense. One of these defects is, to our mind, fatal to Mr. Swinburne's style; the other is fatal to his tone, to his temper, to his critical pretensions. His style is without measure, without discretion, without sense of what to take and what to leave; after a few pages, it becomes intolerably fatiguing. It is always listening to itself—always turning its head over its shoulders to see its train flowing behind it.

The train shimmers and tumbles in a very gorgeous fashion, but the rustle of its embroidery is fatally importunate.

Mr. Swinburne is a dozen times too verbose; at least one-half of his phrases are what the French call phrases in the air. One-half of his sentence is always a repetition, for mere fancy's sake and nothing more, of the meaning of the other half—a play upon its words, an echo, a reflection, a duplication. This trick, of course, makes a writer formidably prolix. What we have called the absence of the moral sense of the writer of these essays is, however, their most disagreeable feature. By this we do not mean that Mr. Swinburne is not didactic, nor edifying, nor devoted to pleading the cause of virtue. We mean simply that his moral plummet does not sink at all, and that when he pretends to drop it he is simply dabbling in the relatively very shallow pool of the picturesque.

A sense of the picturesque so refined as Mr. Swinburne's will take one a great way, but it will by no means, in dealing with things whose great value is in what they tell us of human character, take one all the way. One breaks down with it (if one treats it as one's sole support) sooner or later in æsthetics; one breaks down with it very soon indeed in psychology.

We do not remember in this whole volume a single instance of delicate moral discrimination—a sin-

gle case in which the moral note has been struck, in which the idea betrays the smallest acquaintance with the conscience. The moral realm for Mr. Swinburne is simply a brilliant chiaroscuro of costume and posture. This makes all Mr. Swinburne's magnificent talk about Victor Hugo's great criminals and monstrosities, about Shelley's Count Cenci, and Browning's Guido Franchesini, and about dramatic figures generally, quite worthless as anything but amusing fantasy. As psychology it is, to our sense, extremely puerile; for we do not mean simply to say that the author does not understand morality—a charge to which he would be probably quite indifferent; but that he does not at all understand immorality. Such a passage as his rhapsody upon Victor Hugo's Josiane ("such a pantheress may be such a poetess," etc.) means absolutely nothing. It is entertaining as pictorial writing—though even in this respect, as we have said, thanks to excess and redundancy, it is the picturesque spoiled rather than achieved; but as an attempt at serious analysis it seems to us, like many of its companions, simply ghastly—ghastly in its poverty of insight and its pretension to make mere lurid imagery do duty as thought.

THE POETRY OF WILLIAM MORRIS

I. A review of *The Life and Death of Jason:* A poem. By William Morris, Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1867, Originally published in *North American Review,* October, 1867.

II. A review of *The Earthly Paradise:* A poem. By William Morris, Boston: Roberts Bros. 1868. Originally published in *The Nation,* July 9, 1868.

The Earthly Paradise; Parts I and II as originally published in London by F. S. Ellis in 1868, is in one volume, and was issued the same year in Boston by Roberts Brothers. Parts III and IV were issued as volumes II and III under the same title, in London in 1870, and in Boston in 1870–71.

THE POETRY OF WILLIAM MORRIS

I. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON

IN this poetical history of the fortunate—the unfortunate—Jason, Mr. Morris has written a book of real value. It is some time since we have met with a work of imagination of so thoroughly satisfactory a character,—a work read with an enjoyment so unalloyed and so untempered by the desire to protest and to criticise. The poetical firmament within these recent years has been all alive with unprophesied comets and meteors, many of them of extraordinary brilliancy, but most of them very rapid in their passage. Mr. Morris gives us the comfort of feeling that he is a fixed star, and that his radiance is not likely to be extinguished in a draught of wind,—after the fashion of Mr. Alexander Smith, Mr. Swinburne and Miss Ingelow.

Mr. Morris's poem is ushered into the world with a very florid birthday speech from the pen of the author of the too famous *Poems and Ballads*,—a circumstance, we apprehend, in no small degree prejudicial to its success. But we hasten to assure all persons whom the knowledge of Mr. Swinburne's enthusiasm may have led to mistrust the

character of the work, that it has to our perception nothing in common with this gentleman's own productions, and that his article proves very little more than that his sympathies are wiser than his performance. If Mr. Morris's poem may be said to remind us of the manner of any other writer, it is simply of that of Chaucer; and to resemble Chaucer is a great safeguard against resembling Swinburne.

The Life and Death of Jason, then, is a narrative poem on a Greek subject, written in a genuine English style. With the subject all reading people are familiar, and we have no need to retrace its details. But it is perhaps not amiss to transcribe the few pregnant lines of prose into which, at the outset, Mr. Morris has condensed the argument of his poem:—

"Jason the son of Æson, king of Iolchos, having come to man's estate, demanded of Pelias his father's kingdom, which he held wrongfully. But Pelias answered, that if he would bring from Colchis the golden fleece of the ram that had carried Phryxus thither, he would yield him his right. Whereon Jason sailed to Colchis in the ship Argo, with other heroes, and by means of Medea, the king's daughter, won the fleece; and carried off also Medea; and so, after many troubles, came back to Iolchos again. There, by Medea's wiles, was Pelias slain; but Jason went to Corinth, and lived with Medea happily, till he was taken with the love of

Glauce, the king's daughter of Corinth, and must needs wed her; whom also Medea destroyed, and fled to Ægeus at Athens; and not long after Jason died strangely."

The style of this little fragment of prose is not an unapt measure of the author's poetical style,—quaint, but not too quaint, more Anglo-Saxon than Latin, and decidedly laconic. For in spite of the great length of his work, his manner is by no means diffuse. His story is a long one, and he wishes to do it justice; but the movement is rapid and business-like, and the poet is quite guiltless of any wanton lingering along the margin of the subject matter,—after the manner, for instance, of Keats,—to whom, individually, however, we make this tendency no reproach. Mr. Morris's subject is immensely rich,—heavy with its richness,—and in the highest degree romantic and poetical. For the most part, of course, he found not only the great *contours*, but the various incidents and episodes, ready drawn to his hand; but still there was enough wanting to make a most exhaustive drain upon his ingenuity and his imagination. And not only these faculties have been brought into severe exercise, but the strictest good taste and good sense were called into play, together with a certain final gift which we hardly know how to name, and which is by no means common, even among very clever poets,—a comprehensive sense of form, of proportion, and of

real completeness, without which the most brilliant efforts of the imagination are a mere agglomeration of ill-reconciled beauties. The legend of Jason is full of strangely constructed marvels and elaborate prodigies and horrors, calculated to task heavily an author's adroitness.

We have so pampered and petted our sense of the ludicrous of late years, that it is quite the spoiled child of the house, and without its leave no guest can be honourably entertained. It is very true that the atmosphere of Grecian mythology is so entirely an artificial one, that we are seldom tempted to refer its weird anomalous denizens to our standard of truth and beauty. Truth, indeed, is at once put out of the question; but one would say beforehand, that many of the creations of Greek fancy were wanting even in beauty, or at least in that ease and simplicity which has been acquired in modern times by force of culture. But habit and tradition have reconciled us to these things in their native forms, and Mr. Morris's skill reconciles us to them in his modern and composite English.

The idea, for instance, of a *flying ram*, seems, to an undisciplined fancy, a not especially happy creation, nor a very promising theme for poetry; but Mr. Morris, without diminishing its native oddity, has given it an ample romantic dignity. So, again, the sowing of the dragon's teeth

at Colchis, and the springing up of mutually opposed armed men, seems too complex and recondite a scene to be vividly and gracefully realized; but as it stands, it is one of the finest passages in Mr. Morris's poem. His great stumbling-block, however, we take it, was the necessity of maintaining throughout the dignity and prominence of his hero. From the moment that Medea comes into the poem, Jason falls into the second place, and keeps it to the end. She is the all-wise and all-brave helper and counsellor at Colchis, and the guardian angel of the returning journey. She saves her companions from the Circean enchantments, and she withholds them from the embraces of the Sirens. She effects the death of Pelias, and assures the successful return of the Argonauts. And finally—as a last claim upon her interest—she is slighted and abandoned by the man of her love. Without question, then, she is the central figure of the poem,—a powerful and enchanting figure,—a creature of barbarous arts, and of exquisite human passions. Jason accordingly possesses only that indirect hold upon our attention which belongs to the Virgilian Æneas; although Mr. Morris has avoided Virgil's error of now and then allowing his hero to be contemptible.

A large number, however, of far greater drawbacks than any we are able to mention could not materially diminish the powerful beauty of this

fantastic legend. It is as rich in adventure as the Odyssey, and very much simpler. Its prime elements are of the most poetical and delightful kind. What can be more thrilling than the idea of a great boatful of warriors embarking upon dreadful seas, not for pleasure, nor for conquest, nor for any material advantage, but for the simple discovery of a jealously watched, magically guarded relic? There is in the character of the object of their quest something heroically unmarketable, or at least unavailable.

But of course the story owes a vast deal to its episodes, and these have lost nothing in Mr. Morris's hands. One of the most beautiful—the well known adventure of Hylas—occurs at the very outset. The beautiful young man, during a halt of the ship, wanders inland through the forest, and, passing beside a sylvan stream, is espied and incontinently loved by the water nymphs, who forthwith "detach" one of their number to work his seduction. This young lady assumes the disguise and speech of a Northern princess, clad in furs, and in this character sings to her victim "a sweet song, sung not yet to any man." Very sweet and truly lyrical it is like all the songs scattered through Mr. Morris's narrative. We are, indeed, almost in doubt whether the most beautiful passages in the poem do not occur in the series of songs in the fourteenth book.

The ship has already touched at the island of Circe, and the sailors, thanks to the earnest warnings of Medea, have abstained from setting foot on the fatal shore; while Medea has, in turn, been warned by the enchantress against the allurements of the Sirens. As soon as the ship draws nigh, these fair beings begin to utter their irresistible notes. All eyes are turned lovingly on the shore, the rowers' charmed muscles relax, and the ship drifts landward. But Medea exhorts and entreats her companions to preserve their course. Jason himself is not untouched, as Mr. Morris delicately tells us,— "a moment Jason gazed." But Orpheus smites his lyre before it is too late, and stirs the languid blood of his comrades. The Sirens strike their harps amain, and a conflict of song arises. The Sirens sing of the cold, the glittering, the idle delights of their submarine homes; while Orpheus tells of the warm and pastoral landscapes of Greece. We have no space for quotation; of course Orpheus carries the day. But the finest and most delicate practical sense is shown in the alternation of the two lyrical arguments,—the soulless sweetness of the one, and the deep human richness of the other.

There is throughout Mr. Morris's poem a great unity and evenness of excellence, which make selection and quotation difficult; but of impressive touches in our reading we noticed a very great

number. We content ourselves with mentioning a single one. When Jason has sown his bag of dragon's teeth at Colchis, and the armed fighters have sprung up along the furrows, and under the spell contrived by Medea have torn each other to death:—

> "One man was left alive, but wounded sore,
> Who, staring round about and seeing no more
> His brothers' spears against him, fixed his eyes
> Upon the queller of those mysteries.
> Then dreadfully they gleamed, and with no word,
> He tottered towards him with uplifted sword.
> But scarce he made three paces down the field,
> Ere chill death seized his heart, and on his shield
> Clattering he fell."

We have not spoken of Mr. Morris's versification nor of his vocabulary. We have only room to say that, to our perception, the first in its facility and harmony, and the second in its abundance and studied simplicity, leave nothing to be desired. There are of course faults and errors in his poem, but there are none that are not trivial and easily pardoned in the light of the fact that he has given us a work of consummate art and of genuine beauty. He has foraged in a treasure-house; he has visited the ancient world, and come back with a massive cup of living Greek wine. His project was no light task, but he has honourably fulfilled

it. He has enriched the language with a narrative poem which we are sure that the public will not suffer to fall into the ranks of honoured but uncherished works,—objects of vague and sapient reference,—but will continue to read and to enjoy. In spite of its length, the interest of the story never flags, and as a work of art it never ceases to be pure. To the jaded intellects of the present moment, distracted with the strife of creeds and the conflict of theories, it opens a glimpse into a world where they will be called upon neither to choose, to criticise, nor to believe, but simply to feel, to look, and to listen.

II. THE EARTHLY PARADISE

This new volume of Mr. Morris is, we think, a book for all time; but it is especially a book for these ripening summer days. To sit in the open shade, inhaling the heated air, and, while you read these perfect fairy tales, these rich and pathetic human traditions to glance up from your page at the clouds and the trees, is to do as pleasant a thing as the heart of man can desire. Mr. Morris's book abounds in all the sounds and sights and sensations of nature, in the warmth of the sunshine, the murmur of forests, and the breath of ocean-scented breezes. The fullness of physical existence which belongs to climates where life is spent in the open air, is largely diffused through its pages:

. . . "Hot July was drawing to an end,
And August came the fainting year to mend
With fruit and grain; so 'neath the trellises,
Nigh blossomless, did they lie well at ease,
And watched the poppies burn across the grass,
And o'er the bindweed's bells the brown bee pass,
Still murmuring of his gains: windless and bright
The morn had been, to help their dear delight.
. . . Then a light wind arose
That shook the light stems of that flowery close,
And made men sigh for pleasure."

This is a random specimen. As you read, the fictitious universe of the poem seems to expand and advance out of its remoteness, to surge musically about your senses, and merge itself utterly in the universe which surrounds you. The summer brightness of the real world goes halfway to meet it; and the beautiful figures which throb with life in Mr. Morris's stories pass lightly to and fro between the realm of poetry and the mild atmosphere of fact. This quality was half the charm of the author's former poem, *The Life and Death of Jason,* published last summer. We seemed really to follow, beneath the changing sky, the fantastic boatload of wanderers in their circuit of the ancient world. For people compelled to stay at home, the perusal of the book in a couple of mornings was very nearly as good as a fortnight's holiday. The poem appeared to reflect so clearly and forcibly

the poet's natural sympathies with the external world, and his joy in personal contact with it, that the reader obtained something very like a sense of physical transposition, without either physical or intellectual weariness.

This ample and direct presentment of the joys of action and locomotion seems to us to impart to these two works a truly national and English tone. They taste not perhaps of the English soil, but of those strong English sensibilities which the great insular race carry with them through their wanderings, which they preserve and apply with such energy in every terrestrial clime, and which make them such incomparable travellers. We heartily recommend such persons as have a desire to accommodate their reading to the season—as are vexed with a delicate longing to place themselves intellectually in relation with the genius of the summer—to take this *Earthly Paradise* with them to the country.

The book is a collection of tales in verse—found, without exception, we take it, rather than imagined, and linked together, somewhat loosely, by a narrative prologue. The following is the "argument" of the prologue—already often enough quoted, but pretty enough, in its ingenious prose, to quote again:—

"Certain gentlemen and mariners of Norway, having considered all that they had heard of the

Earthly Paradise, set sail to find it, and, after many troubles and the lapse of many years, came old men to some western land, of which they had never before heard: there they died, when they had dwelt there certain years, much honoured of the strange people."

The adventures of these wanderers, told by one of their number, Rolf the Norseman, born at Byzantium—a happy origin for the teller of a heroic tale, as the author doubtless felt—make, to begin with, a poem of considerable length, and of a beauty superior perhaps to that of the succeeding tales. An admirable romance of adventure has Mr. Morris unfolded in the melodious energy of this half-hurrying, half-lingering narrative—a romance to make old hearts beat again with the boyish longing for transmarine mysteries, and to plunge boys themselves into a delicious agony of unrest.

The story is a tragedy, or very near it—as what story of the search for an Earthly Paradise could fail to be? Fate reserves for the poor storm-tossed adventurers a sort of fantastic compromise between their actual misery and their ideal bliss, whereby a kindly warmth is infused into the autumn of their days, and to the reader, at least, a very tolerable Earthly Paradise is laid open. The elders and civic worthies of the western land which finally sheltered them summon them every month to a feast, where, when all grosser desires have been

duly pacified, the company sit at their ease and listen to the recital of stories. Mr. Morris gives in this volume the stories of the six midmonths of the year, two tales being allotted to each month—one from the Greek Mythology, and one, to express it broadly, of a Gothic quality. He announces a second series in which, we infer, he will in the same manner give us the stories rehearsed at the winter fireside.

The Greek stories are the various histories of Atalanta, of Perseus, of Cupid and Psyche, of Alcestis, of Atys, the hapless son of Crœsus, and of Pygmalion. The companion pieces, which always serve excellently well to place in relief the perfect pagan character of their elder mates, deal of course with elements less generally known.

"Atalanta's Race," the first of Mr. Morris's Greek legends, is to our mind almost the best. There is something wonderfully simple and child-like in the story, and the author has given it ample dignity, at the same time that he has preserved this quality.

Most vividly does he present the mild invincibility of his fleet-footed heroine and the half-boyish simplicity of her demeanour—a perfect model of a *belle inhumaine*. But the most beautiful passage in the poem is the description of the vigil of the love-sick Milanion in the lonely sea-side temple of Venus. The author has conveyed with exquisite

art the sense of devout stillness and of pagan sanctity which invests this remote and prayerful spot. The yellow torch-light,

> "Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
> The temple damsels sung their evening hymn;"

the sound of the shallow flowing sea without, the young man's restless sleep on the pavement, besprinkled with the ocean spray, the apparition of the goddess with the early dawn, bearing the golden apple—all these delicate points are presented in the light of true poetry.

The narrative of the adventures of Danaë and of Perseus and Andromeda is, with the exception of the tale of Cupid and Psyche which follows it, the longest piece in the volume. Of the two, we think we prefer the latter. Unutterably touching is the career of the tender and helpless Psyche, and most impressive the terrible hostility of Venus. The author, we think, throughout manages this lady extremely well. She appears to us in a sort of rosy dimness, through which she looms as formidable as she is beautiful, and gazing with "gentle eyes and unmoved smiles,"

> "Such as in Cyprus, the fair blossomed isle,
> When on the altar in the summer night
> They pile the roses up for her delight,
> Men see within their hearts."

"The Love of Alcestis" is the beautiful story of the excellent wife who, when her husband was ill, gave up her life, so that he might recover and live for ever. Half the interest here, however, lies in the servitude of Apollo in disguise, and in the touching picture of the radiant god doing in perfection the homely work of his office, and yet from time to time emitting flashes, as it were, of genius and deity, while the good Admetus observes him half in kindness and half in awe.

The story of the "Son of Crœsus," the poor young man who is slain by his best friend because the gods had foredoomed it, is simple, pathetic, and brief. The finest and sweetest poem in the volume, to our taste, is the tale of "Pygmalion and the Image." The merit of execution is perhaps not appreciably greater here than in the other pieces, but the legend is so unutterably charming that it claims precedence of its companions. As beautiful as anything in all our later poetry, we think, is the description of the growth and dominance in the poor sculptor's heart of his marvellous passion for the stony daughter of his hands. Borne along on the steady, changing flow of his large and limpid verse, the author glides into the situation with an ease and grace and fullness of sympathy worthy of a great master. Here, as elsewhere, there is no sign of effort or of strain. In spite of the studied and *recherché* character of his

diction, there is not a symptom of affectation in thought or speech. We seem in this tale of "Pygmalion" truly to inhabit the bright and silent workroom of a great Greek artist, and, standing among shapes and forms of perfect beauty, to breathe the incense-tainted air in which lovely statues were conceived and shining stones chiselled into immortality.

Mr. Morris is indubitably a sensuous poet, to his credit be it said; his senses are constantly proffering their testimony and crying out their delight. But while they take their freedom, they employ it in no degree to their own debasement. Just as there is modesty of temperament we conceive there is modesty of imagination, and Mr. Morris possesses the latter distinction. The total absence of it is, doubtless, the long and short of Mr. Swinburne's various troubles. We may imagine Mr. Swinburne making a very clever poem of this story of "Pygmalion," but we cannot fancy him making it anything less than utterly disagreeable. The thoroughly agreeable way in which Mr. Morris tells it is what especially strikes us. We feel that his imagination is equally fearless and irreproachable, and that while he tells us what we may call a sensuous story in all its breadth, he likewise tells it in all its purity. It has, doubtless, an impure side; but of the two he prefers the other. While Pygmalion

is all aglow with his unanswered passion, he one day sits down before his image:

> "And at the last drew forth a book of rhymes,
> Wherein were writ the tales of many climes,
> And read aloud the sweetness hid therein
> Of lovers' sorrows and their tangled sin."

He reads aloud to his marble torment: would Mr. Swinburne have touched that note?

We have left ourselves no space to describe in detail the other series of tales—"The Man born to be King," "The Proud King," "The Writing on the Image," "The Lady of the Land," "The Watching of the Falcon," and "Ogier the Dane."

The author in his *Jason* identified himself with the successful treatment of Greek subjects to such a degree as to make it easy to suppose that these matters were the specialty of his genius. But in these romantic modern stories the same easy power is revealed, the same admirable union of natural gifts and cultivated perceptions. Mr. Morris is evidently a poet in the broad sense of the word—a singer of human joys and sorrows, whenever and wherever found. His somewhat artificial diction, which would seem to militate against our claim that his genius is of the general and comprehensive order, is, we imagine, simply an achievement of his own. It is not imposed from without, but de-

veloped from within. Whatever may be said of it, it certainly will not be accused of being unpoetical; and except this charge, what serious one can be made?

The author's style—according to our impression—is neither Chaucerian, Spenserian, nor imitative; it is literary, indeed, but it has a freedom and irregularity, an adaptability to the movements of the author's mind, which make it an ample vehicle of poetical utterance. He says in this language of his own the most various and the most truthful things; he moves, melts, and delights. Such at least, is our own experience. Other persons, we know, find it difficult to take him entirely *au sérieux*. But we, taking him—and our critical duties too—in the most serious manner our mind permits of, feel strongly impelled, both by gratitude and by reflection, to pronounce him a noble and delightful poet. To call a man healthy nowadays is almost an insult—invalids learn so many secrets. But the health of the intellect is often promoted by physical disability. We say therefore, finally, that however the faculty may have been promoted—with the minimum of suffering, we certainly hope—Mr. Morris is a supremely healthy writer. This poem is marked by all that is broad and deep in nature, and all that is elevating, profitable, and curious in art.

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S ESSAYS

A review of *Essays in Criticism.* By Matthew Arnold, Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1865. Originally published in *North American Review,* July, 1865.

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S ESSAYS

MR. ARNOLD'S *Essays in Criticism* come to American readers with a reputation already made,—the reputation of a charming style, a great deal of excellent feeling, and an almost equal amount of questionable reasoning. It is for us either to confirm the verdict passed in the author's own country, or to judge his work afresh. It is often the fortune of English writers to find mitigation of sentence in the United States.

The Essays contained in this volume are on purely literary subjects; which is for us, by itself, a strong recommendation. English literature, especially contemporary literature, is, compared with that of France and Germany, very poor in collections of this sort. A great deal of criticism is written, but little of it is kept; little of it is deemed to contain any permanent application. Mr. Arnold will doubtless find in this fact—if indeed he has not already signalized it—but another proof of the inferiority of the English to the Continental school of criticism, and point to it as a baleful effect of the narrow practical spirit which animates, or, as he would probably say, paralyzes, the former. But

not only is his book attractive as a whole, from its exclusively literary character; the subject of each essay is moreover particularly interesting. The first paper is on the function of Criticism at the present time; a question, if not more important, perhaps more directly pertinent here than in England. The second, discussing the literary influence of Academies, contains a great deal of valuable observation and reflection in a small compass and under an inadequate title. The other essays are upon the two De Guérins, Heinrich Heine, Pagan and Mediæval Religious Sentiment, Joubert, Spinoza, and Marcus Aurelius. The first two articles are, to our mind, much the best; the next in order of excellence is the paper on Joubert; while the others, with the exception, perhaps, of that on Spinoza, are of about equal merit.

Mr. Arnold's style has been praised at once too much and too little. Its resources are decidedly limited; but if the word had not become so cheap, we should nevertheless call it fascinating. This quality implies no especial force; it rests in this case on the fact that, whether or not you agree with the matter beneath it, the manner inspires you with a personal affection for the author. It expresses great sensibility, and at the same time great good-nature; it indicates a mind both susceptible and healthy. With the former element alone it would savour of affectation; with the latter, it would be

coarse. As it stands, it represents a spirit both sensitive and generous. We can best describe it, perhaps, by the word sympathetic. It exhibits frankly, and without detriment to its national character, a decided French influence. Mr. Arnold is too wise to attempt to write French English; he probably knows that a language can only be indirectly enriched; but as nationality is eminently a matter of form, he knows too that he can really violate nothing so long as he adheres to the English letter.

His Preface is a striking example of the intelligent amiability which animates his style. His two leading Essays were, on their first appearance, made the subject of much violent contention, their moral being deemed little else than a wholesale schooling of the English press by the French programme. Nothing could have better proved the justice of Mr. Arnold's remarks upon the "provincial" character of the English critical method than the reception which they provoked. He now acknowledges this reception in a short introduction, which admirably reconciles smoothness of temper with sharpness of wit. The taste of this performance has been questioned; but wherever it may err, it is assuredly not in being provincial; it is essentially civil. Mr. Arnold's amiability is, in our eye, a strong proof of his wisdom. If he were a few degrees more short-sighted, he might have less equa-

nimity at his command. Those who sympathise with him warmly will probably like him best as he is; but with such as are only half his friends, this freedom from party passion, from what is after all but a lawful professional emotion, will argue against his sincerity.

For ourselves, we doubt not that Mr. Arnold possesses thoroughly what the French call the courage of his opinions. When you lay down a proposition which is forthwith controverted, it is of course optional with you to take up the cudgels in its defence. If you are deeply convinced of its truth, you will perhaps be content to leave it to take care of itself; or, at all events, you will not go out of your way to push its fortunes; for you will reflect that in the long run an opinion often borrows credit from the forbearance of its patrons. In the long run, we say; it will meanwhile cost you an occasional pang to see your cherished theory turned into a football by the critics. A football is not, as such, a very respectable object, and the more numerous the players, the more ridiculous it becomes. Unless, therefore, you are very confident of your ability to rescue it from the chaos of kicks, you will best consult its interests by not mingling in the game. Such has been Mr. Arnold's choice. His opponents say that he is too much of a poet to be a critic; he is certainly too much of a poet to be a disputant. In the Preface in question he has

abstained from reiterating any of the views put forth in the two offensive Essays; he has simply taken a delicate literary vengeance upon his adversaries.

For Mr. Arnold's critical feeling and observation, used independently of his judgment, we profess a keen relish. He has these qualities, at any rate, of a good critic, whether or not he have the others, —the science and the logic. It is hard to say whether the literary critic is more called upon to understand or to feel. It is certain that he will accomplish little unless he can feel acutely; although it is perhaps equally certain that he will become weak the moment that he begins to "work," as we may say, his natural sensibilities. The best critic is probably he who leaves his feelings out of account, and relies upon reason for success. If he actually possesses delicacy of feeling, his work will be delicate without detriment to its solidity. The complaint of Mr. Arnold's critics is that his arguments are too sentimental. Whether this complaint is well founded, we shall hereafter inquire; let us determine first what sentiment has done for him. It has given him, in our opinion, his greatest charm and his greatest worth. Hundreds of other critics have stronger heads; few, in England at least, have more delicate perceptions. We regret that we have not the space to confirm this assertion by extracts. We must refer the reader to

the book itself, where he will find on every page an illustration of our meaning. He will find one, first of all, in the apostrophe to the University of Oxford, at the close of the Preface,—"home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs and unpopular names and impossible loyalties." This is doubtless nothing but sentiment, but it seizes a shade of truth, and conveys it with a directness which is not at the command of logical demonstration. Such a process might readily prove, with the aid of a host of facts, that the University is actually the abode of much retarding conservatism; a fine critical instinct alone, and the measure of audacity which accompanies such an instinct, could succeed in placing her on the side of progress by boldly saluting her as the Queen of Romance: romance being the deadly enemy of the commonplace; the commonplace being the fast ally of Philistinism, and Philistinism the heaviest drag upon the march of civilisation.

Mr. Arnold is very fond of quoting Goethe's eulogy upon Schiller, to the effect that his friend's greatest glory was to have left so far behind him *was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine,* that bane of mankind, the common. Exactly how much the inscrutable Goethe made of this fact, it is hard at this day to determine; but it will seem to many readers that Mr. Arnold makes too much of it. Perhaps he does, for himself; but for the public

in general he decidedly does not. One of the chief duties of criticism is to exalt the importance of the ideal; and Goethe's speech has a long career in prospect before we can say with the vulgar that it is "played out." Its repeated occurrence in Mr. Arnold's pages is but another instance of poetic feeling subserving the ends of criticism.

The famous comment upon the girl Wragg, over which the author's opponents made so merry, we likewise owe—we do not hesitate to declare it—to this same poetic feeling. Why cast discredit upon so valuable an instrument of truth? Why not wait at least until it is used in the service of error? The worst that can be said of the paragraph in question is, that it is a great ado about nothing. All thanks, say we, to the critic who will pick up such nothings as these; for if he neglects them, they are blindly trodden under foot. They may not be especially valuable, but they are for that very reason the critic's particular care. Great truths take care of themselves; great truths are carried aloft by philosophers and poets; the critic deals in contributions to truth.

Another illustration of the nicety of Mr. Arnold's feeling is furnished by his remarks upon the quality of *distinction* as exhibited in Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin, "that quality which at last inexorably corrects the world's blunders and fixes the world's ideals, [which] procures that the popu-

lar poet shall not pass for a Pindar, the popular historian for a Tacitus, nor the popular preacher for a Bossuet." Another is offered by his incidental remarks upon Coleridge, in the article on Joubert; another, by the remarkable felicity with which he has translated Maurice de Guérin's *Centaur;* and another, by the whole body of citations with which, in his second Essay, he fortifies his proposition that the establishment in England of an authority answering to the French Academy would have arrested certain evil tendencies of English literature,—for to nothing more offensive than this, as far as we can see, does this argument amount.

In the first and most important of his Essays Mr. Arnold puts forth his views upon the actual duty of criticism. They may be summed up as follows. Criticism has no concern with the practical; its function is simply to get at the best thought which is current,—to see things in themselves as they are,—to be disinterested. Criticism can be disinterested, says Mr. Arnold,

"by keeping from practice; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches, by steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior political, practical considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this coun-

try, at any rate, are certain to be attached to them, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and, by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications,— questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them."

We used just now a word of which Mr. Arnold is very fond,—a word of which the general reader may require an explanation, but which, when explained, he will be likely to find indispensable; we mean the word *Philistine.* The term is of German origin, and has no English synonyme. "At Soli," remarks Mr. Arnold, "I imagined they did not talk of solecisms; and here, at the very head-quarters of Goliath, nobody talks of Philistinism." The word *épicier,* used by Mr. Arnold as a French synonyme, is not so good as *bourgeois,* and to those who know that *bourgeois* means a citizen, and who reflect that a citizen is a person seriously interested in the maintenance of order, the German term may now assume a more special significance. An English review briefly defines it by saying that "it applies to the fat-headed respectable public in general." This definition must satisfy us here. The Philistine portion of the

English press, by which we mean the considerably larger portion, received Mr. Arnold's novel programme of criticism with the uncompromising disapprobation which was to be expected from a literary body, the principle of whose influence, or indeed of whose being is its subservience, through its various members, to certain political and religious interests.

Mr. Arnold's general theory was offensive enough; but the conclusions drawn by him from the fact that English practice has been so long and so directly at variance with it, were such as to excite the strongest animosity. Chief among these was the conclusion that this fact has retarded the development and vulgarised the character of the English mind, as compared with the French and the German mind. This rational inference may be nothing but a poet's flight; but for ourselves, we assent to it. It reaches us too. The facts collected by Mr. Arnold on this point have long wanted a voice. It has long seemed to us that, as a nation, the English are singularly incapable of large, of high, of general views. They are indifferent to pure truth, to *la verité vraie*. Their views are almost exclusively practical, and it is in the nature of practical views to be narrow. They seldom indeed admit a fact but on compulsion; they demand of an idea some better recommendation, some longer pedigree, than that it is true.

That this lack of spontaneity in the English intellect is caused by the tendency of English criticism, or that it is to be corrected by a diversion, or even by a complete reversion, of this tendency, neither Mr. Arnold nor ourselves suppose, nor do we look upon such a result as desirable. The part which Mr. Arnold assigns to his reformed method of criticism is a purely tributary part. Its indirect result will be to quicken the naturally irrational action of the English mind; its direct result will be to furnish that mind with a larger stock of ideas than it has enjoyed under the time-honoured *régime* of Whig and Tory, High-Church and Low-Church organs.

We may here remark, that Mr. Arnold's statement of his principles is open to some misinterpretation,—an accident against which he has, perhaps, not sufficiently guarded it. For many persons the word *practical* is almost identical with the word *useful*, against which, on the other hand, they erect the word *ornamental*. Persons who are fond of regarding these two terms as irreconcilable, will have little patience with Mr. Arnold's scheme of criticism. They will look upon it as an organised preference of unprofitable speculation to common sense. But the great beauty of the critical movement advocated by Mr. Arnold is that in either direction its range of action is unlimited. It deals with plain facts as well as with the most exalted

fancies; but it deals with them only for the sake of the truth which is in them, and not for *your* sake, reader, and that of your party. It takes *high ground,* which is the ground of theory. It does not busy itself with consequences, which are all in all to you. Do not suppose that it for this reason pretends to ignore or to undervalue consequences; on the contrary, it is because it knows that consequences are inevitable that it leaves them alone. It cannot do two things at once; it cannot serve two masters. Its business is to make truth generally accessible, and not to apply it. It is only on condition of having its hands free, that it can make truth generally accessible. We said just now that its duty was, among other things, to exalt, if possible, the importance of the ideal. We should perhaps have said the intellectual; that is, of the principle of understanding things. Its business is to urge the claims of all things to be understood. If this is its function in England, as Mr. Arnold represents, it seems to us that it is doubly its function in this country. Here is no lack of votaries of the practical, of experimentalists, of empirics. The tendencies of our civilisation are certainly not such as foster a preponderance of morbid speculation. Our national genius inclines yearly more and more to resolve itself into a vast machine for sifting, in all things, the wheat from the chaff. American society is so shrewd, that we may safely allow it to

make application of the truths of the study. Only let us keep it supplied with the truths of the study, and not with the half-truths of the forum. Let criticism take the stream of truth at its source, and then practice can take it half-way down. When criticism takes it half-way down, practice will come poorly off.

If we have not touched upon the faults of Mr. Arnold's volume, it is because they are faults of detail, and because, when, as a whole, a book commands our assent, we do not incline to quarrel with its parts. Some of the parts in these Essays are weak, others are strong; but the impression which they all combine to leave is one of such beauty as to make us forget, not only their particular faults, but their particular merits. If we were asked what is the particular merit of a given essay, we should reply that it is a merit much less common at the present day than is generally supposed,—the merit which pre-eminently characterises Mr. Arnold's poems, the merit, namely, of having a *subject*. Each essay is *about* something. If a literary work now-a-days start with a certain topic, that is all that is required of it; and yet it is a work of art only on condition of ending with that topic, on condition of being written, not from it, but to it. If the average modern essay or poem were to wear its title at the close, and not at the beginning, we wonder in how many cases the reader

would fail to be surprised by it. A book or an article is looked upon as a kind of Staubbach waterfall, discharging itself into infinite space.

If we were questioned as to the merit of Mr. Arnold's book as a whole, we should say that it lay in the fact that the author takes high ground. The manner of his Essays is a model of what criticisms should be. The foremost English critical journal, the Saturday Review, recently disposed of a famous writer by saying, in a parenthesis, that he had done nothing but write nonsense all his life. Mr. Arnold does not pass judgment in parenthesis. He is too much of an artist to use leading propositions for merely literary purposes. The consequence is, that he says a few things in such a way as that almost in spite of ourselves we remember them, instead of a number of things which we cannot for the life of us remember. There are many things which we wish he had said better. It is to be regretted, for instance, that, when Heine is for once in a way seriously spoken of, he should not be spoken of more as the great poet which he is, and which even in New England he will one day be admitted to be, than with reference to the great moralist which he is not, and which he never claimed to be. But here, as in other places, Mr. Arnold's excellent spirit reconciles us with his shortcomings. If he has not spoken of Heine exhaustively, he has at all events spoken of him

seriously, which for an Englishman is a good deal.

Mr. Arnold's supreme virtue is that he speaks of all things seriously, or, in other words, that he is not offensively clever. The writers who are willing to resign themselves to this obscure distinction are in our opinion the only writers who understand their time. That Mr. Arnold thoroughly understands his time we do not mean to say, for this is the privilege of a very select few; but he is, at any rate, profoundly conscious of his time. This fact was clearly apparent in his poems, and it is even more apparent in these Essays. It gives them a peculiar character of melancholy,—that melancholy which arises from the spectacle of the old-fashioned instinct of enthusiasm in conflict (or at all events in contact) with the modern desire to be fair,—the melancholy of an age which not only has lost its *naïveté,* but which knows it has lost it.

MR. WALT WHITMAN

An unsigned review of *Walt Whitman's* Drum-Taps, New York, 1865. Originally published in *The Nation*, November 16, 1865.

As this review has long been familiar to students of Whitman, and its authorship quite generally known, the original title has been retained here.

MR. WALT WHITMAN

IT has been a melancholy task to read this book; and it is a still more melancholy one to write about it. Perhaps since the day of Mr. Tupper's *Philosophy* there has been no more difficult reading of the poetic sort. It exhibits the effort of an essentially prosaic mind to lift itself, by a prolonged muscular strain, into poetry. Like hundreds of other good patriots, during the last four years, Mr. Walt Whitman has imagined that a certain amount of violent sympathy with the great deeds and sufferings of our soldiers, and of admiration for our national energy, together with a ready command of picturesque language, are sufficient inspiration for a poet. If this were the case, we had been a nation of poets. The constant developments of the war moved us continually to strong feeling and to strong expression of it. But in those cases in which these expressions were written out and printed with all due regard to prosody, they failed to make poetry, as any one may see by consulting now in cold blood the back volumes of the *Rebellion Record.*

Of course the city of Manhattan, as Mr. Whitman delights to call it, when regiments poured through it in the first months of the war, and its own sole god, to borrow the words of a real poet, ceased for a while to be the millionaire, was a noble spectacle, and a poetical statement to this effect is possible. *Of course* the tumult of a battle is grand, the results of a battle tragic, and the untimely deaths of young men a theme for elegies. But he is not a poet who merely reiterates these plain facts *ore rotundo.* He only sings them worthily who views them from a height. Every tragic event collects about it a number of persons who delight to dwell upon its superficial points—of minds which are bullied by the *accidents* of the affair. The temper of such minds seems to us to be the reverse of the poetic temper; for the poet, although he incidentally masters, grasps, and uses the superficial traits of his theme, is really a poet only in so far as he extracts its latent meaning and holds it up to common eyes. And yet from such minds most of our war-verses have come, and Mr. Whitman's utterances, much as the assertion may surprise his friends, are in this respect no exception to general fashion. They are an exception, however, in that they openly pretend to be something better; and this it is that makes them melancholy reading.

Mr. Whitman is very fond of blowing his own trumpet, and he has made very explicit claims for

his books. "Shut not your doors," he exclaims at the outset—

"Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries,
For that which was lacking among you all, yet needed most, I bring;
A book I have made for your dear sake, O soldiers,
And for you, O soul of man, and you, love of comrades;
The words of my book nothing, the life of it everything;
A book separate, not link'd with the rest, nor felt by the intellect;
But you will feel every word, O Libertad! arm'd Libertad!
It shall pass by the intellect to swim the sea, the air,
With joy with you, O soul of man."

These are great pretensions, but it seems to us that the following are even greater:

"From Paumanok starting, I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar, to sing the idea of all;
To the north betaking myself, to sing there arctic songs,
To Kanada, 'till I absorb Kanada in myself — to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs (they are inimitable);
Then to Ohio and Indiana, to sing theirs — to Missouri and Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky — to the Carolinas and Georgia, to sing theirs,

To Texas, and so along up toward California, to roam
accepted everywhere;
To sing first (to the tap of the war-drum, if need be)
The idea of all — of the western world, one and in-
separable,
And then the song of each member of these States."

Mr. Whitman's primary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of our armies; his secondary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of the city of New York. He pursues these objects through a hundred pages of matter which remind us irresistibly of the story of the college professor who, on a venturesome youth bringing him a theme done in blank verse, reminded him that it was not customary in writing prose to begin each line with a capital. The frequent capitals are the only marks of verse in Mr. Whitman's writings. There is, fortunately, but one attempt at rhyme. We say fortunately, for if the inequality of Mr. Whitman's lines were self-registering, as it would be in the case of an anticipated syllable at their close, the effect would be painful in the extreme. As the case stands, each line stands off by itself, in resolute independence of its companions, without a visible goal.

But if Mr. Whitman does not write verse, he does not write ordinary prose. The reader has seen that liberty is "libertad." In like manner, comrade is "camerado"; Americans are "Ameri-

canos''; a pavement is a ''trottoir,'' and Mr. Whitman himself is a ''chansonnier.'' If there is one thing that Mr. Whitman is not, it is this, for Béranger was a *chansonnier*. To appreciate the force of our conjunction, the reader should compare his military lyrics with Mr. Whitman's declamations. Our author's novelty, however, is not in his words, but in the form of his writing. As we have said, it begins for all the world like verse and turns out to be arrant prose. It is more like Mr. Tupper's proverbs than anything we have met.

But what if, in form, it *is* prose? it may be asked. Very good poetry has come out of prose before this. To this we would reply that it must first have gone into it. Prose, in order to be good poetry, must first be good prose. As a general principle, we know of no circumstance more likely to impugn a writer's earnestness than the adoption of an anomalous style. He must have something very original to say if none of the old vehicles will carry his thoughts. Of course he *may* be surprisingly original. Still, presumption is against him. If on examination the matter of his discourse proves very valuable, it justifies, or at any rate excuses, his literary innovation.

But if, on the other hand, it is of a common quality, with nothing new about it but its manners, the public will judge the writer harshly. The

most that can be said of Mr. Whitman's vaticinations is, that, cast in a fluent and familiar manner, the average substance of them might escape unchallenged. But we have seen that Mr. Whitman prides himself especially on the substance—the life—of his poetry. It may be rough, it may be grim, it may be clumsy—such we take to be the author's argument—but it is sincere, it is sublime, it appeals to the soul of man, it is the voice of a people. He tells us, in the lines quoted, that the words of his book are nothing. To our perception they are everything, and very little at that.

A great deal of verse that is nothing but words has, during the war, been sympathetically sighed over and cut out of newspaper corners, because it has possessed a certain simple melody. But Mr. Whitman's verse, we are confident, would have failed even of this triumph, for the simple reason that no triumph, however small, is won but through the exercise of art, and that this volume is an offence against art. It is not enough to be grim and rough and careless; common sense is also necessary, for it is by common sense that we are judged. There exists in even the commonest minds, in literary matters, a certain precise instinct of conservatism, which is very shrewd in detecting wanton eccentricities.

To this instinct Mr. Whitman's attitude seems monstrous. It is monstrous because it pretends

to persuade the soul while it slights the intellect; because it pretends to gratify the feelings while it outrages the taste. The point is that it does this *on theory,* wilfully, consciously, arrogantly. It is the little nursery game of "open your mouth and shut your eyes." Our hearts are often touched through a compromise with the artistic sense, but never in direct violation of it. Mr. Whitman sits down at the outset and counts out the intelligence. This were indeed a wise precaution on his part if the intelligence were only submissive! But when she is deliberately insulted, she takes her revenge by simply standing erect and open-eyed. This is assuredly the best she can do. And if she could find a voice she would probably address Mr. Whitman as follows:—

"You came to woo my sister, the human soul. Instead of giving me a kick as you approach, you should either greet me courteously, or, at least, steal in unobserved. But now you have me on your hands. Your chances are poor. What the human heart desires above all is sincerity, and you do not appear to me sincere. For a lover you talk entirely too much about yourself. In one place you threaten to absorb Kanada. In another you call upon the city of New York to incarnate you, as you have incarnated it. In another you inform us that neither youth pertains to you nor 'delicatesse,' that you are awkward in the parlour, that you do

not dance, and that you have neither bearing, beauty, knowledge, nor fortune. In another place, by an allusion to your 'little songs,' you seem to identify yourself with the third person of the Trinity.

"For a poet who claims to sing 'the idea of all,' this is tolerably egotistical. We look in vain, however, through your book for a single idea. We find nothing but flashy imitations of ideas. We find a medley of extravagances and commonplaces. We find art, measure, grace, sense sneered at on every page, and nothing positive given us in their stead. To be positive one must have something to say; to be positive requires reason, labour, and art; and art requires, above all things, a suppression of one's self, a subordination of one's self to an idea. This will never do for you, whose plan is to adapt the scheme of the universe to your own limitations. You cannot entertain and exhibit ideas; but, as we have seen, you are prepared to incarnate them. It is for this reason, doubtless, that when once you have planted yourself squarely before the public, and in view of the great service you have done to the ideal, have become, as you say, 'accepted everywhere,' you can afford to deal exclusively in words. What would be bald nonsense and dreary platitudes in any one else becomes sublimity in you.

"But all this is a mistake. To become adopted as a national poet, it is not enough to discard

everything in particular and to accept everything in general, to amass crudity upon crudity, to discharge the undigested contents of your blotting-book into the lap of the public. You must respect the public which you address; for it has taste, if you have not. It delights in the grand, the heroic, and the masculine; but it delights to see these conceptions cast into worthy form. It is indifferent to brute sublimity. It will never do for you to thrust your hands into your pockets and cry out that, as the research of form is an intolerable bore, the shortest and most economical way for the public to embrace its idols—for the nation to realise its genius—is in your own person.

"This democratic, liberty-loving, American populace, this stern and war-tried people, is a great civiliser. It is devoted to refinement. If it has sustained a monstrous war, and practised human nature's best in so many ways for the last five years, it is not to put up with spurious poetry afterwards. To sing aright our battles and our glories it is not enough to have served in a hospital (however praiseworthy the task in itself), to be aggressively careless, inelegant, and ignorant, and to be constantly preoccupied with yourself. It is not enough to be rude, lugubrious, and grim. You must also be serious. You must forget yourself in your ideas. Your personal qualities—the vigour of your temperament, the manly independence of

your nature, the tenderness of your heart—these facts are impertinent. You must be *possessed,* and you must thrive to possess your possession. If in your striving you break into divine eloquence, then you are a poet. If the idea which possesses you is the idea of your country's greatness, then you are a national poet; and not otherwise."

THE POETRY OF GEORGE ELIOT

I. A review of *The Spanish Gypsy. A Poem.* By George Eliot. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1868. Originally published in *North American Review*, October, 1868.

II. A review of *The Legend of Jubal, and other Poems.* By George Eliot. Wm. Blackwood and Sons: Edinburgh and London. 1874. Originally published in *North American Review*, October, 1874.

THE POETRY OF GEORGE ELIOT

I. THE SPANISH GYPSY

I KNOW not whether George Eliot has any enemies, nor why she should have any; but if perchance she has, I can imagine them to have hailed the announcement of a poem from her pen as a piece of particularly good news. "Now, finally," I fancy them saying, "this sadly overrated author will exhibit all the weakness that is in her; now she will prove herself what we have all along affirmed her to be—not a serene, self-directing genius of the first order, knowing her powers and respecting them, and content to leave well enough alone, but a mere showy rhetorician, possessed and prompted, not by the humble spirit of truth, but by an insatiable longing for applause." Suppose Mr. Tennyson were to come out with a novel, or Madame George Sand were to produce a tragedy in French alexandrines. The reader will agree with me, that these are hard suppositions; yet the world has seen stranger things, and been reconciled to them. Nevertheless, with the best possible will toward our illustrious novelist, it is easy to put ourselves in the shoes of these

hypothetical detractors. No one, assuredly, but George Eliot could mar George Eliot's reputation; but there was room for the fear that she might do it. This reputation was essentially prose-built, and in the attempt to insert a figment of verse of the magnitude of *The Spanish Gypsy*, it was quite possible that she might injure its fair proportions.

In consulting her past works, for approval of their hopes and their fears, I think both her friends and her foes would have found sufficient ground for their arguments. Of all our English prose-writers of the present day, I think I may say, that, as a writer simply, a mistress of style, I have been very near preferring the author of *Silas Marner* and of *Romola*,—the author, too, of *Felix Holt*. The motive of my great regard for her style I take to have been that I fancied it such perfect solid prose. Brilliant and lax as it was in tissue, it seemed to contain very few of the silken threads of poetry; it lay on the ground like a carpet, instead of floating in the air like a banner. If my impression was correct, *The Spanish Gypsy* is not a genuine poem. And yet, looking over the author's novels in memory, looking them over in the light of her unexpected assumption of the poetical function, I find it hard at times not to mistrust my impression. I like George Eliot well enough, in fact, to admit, for the time, that I might have been in the wrong. If I had liked her less, if I

had rated lower the quality of her prose, I should have estimated coldly the possibilities of her verse. Of course, therefore, if, as I am told many persons do in England, who consider carpenters and weavers and millers' daughters no legitimate subject for reputable fiction, I had denied her novels any qualities at all, I should have made haste, on reading the announcement of her poem, to speak of her as the world speaks of a lady, who, having reached a comfortable middle age, with her shoulders decently covered, "for reasons deep below the reach of thought," (to quote our author), begins to go out to dinner in a low-necked dress "of the period," and say in fine, in three words, that she was going to make a fool of herself.

But here, meanwhile, is the book before me, to arrest all this *a priori* argumentation. Time enough has elapsed since its appearance for most readers to have uttered their opinions, and for the general verdict of criticism to have been formed. In looking over several of the published reviews, I am struck with the fact that those immediately issued are full of the warmest delight and approval, and that, as the work ceases to be a novelty, objections, exceptions, and protests multiply. This is quite logical. Not only does it take a much longer time than the reviewer on a weekly journal has at his command to properly appreciate a work of the importance of *The Spanish Gypsy,* but the

poem was actually much more of a poem than was to be expected. The foremost feeling of many readers must have been—it was certainly my own —that we had hitherto only half known George Eliot. Adding this dazzling new half to the old one, readers constructed for the moment a really splendid literary figure. But gradually the old half began to absorb the new, and to assimilate its virtues and failings, and critics finally remembered that the cleverest writer in the world is after all nothing and no one but himself.

The most striking quality in *The Spanish Gypsy,* on a first reading, I think, is its extraordinary rhetorical energy and elegance. The richness of the author's style in her novels gives but an inadequate idea of the splendid generosity of diction displayed in the poem. She is so much of a thinker and an observer that she draws very heavily on her powers of expression, and one may certainly say that they not only never fail her, but that verbal utterance almost always bestows upon her ideas a peculiar beauty and fullness, apart from their significance. The result produced in this manner, the reader will see, may come very near being poetry; it is assuredly eloquence. The faults in the present work are very seldom faults of weakness, except in so far as it is weak to lack an absolute mastery of one's powers; they arise rather from an excess of rhetorical energy, from a desire

to attain to perfect fullness and roundness of utterance; they are faults of overstatement. It is by no means uncommon to find a really fine passage injured by the addition of a clause which dilutes the idea under pretence of completing it. The poem opens, for instance, with a description of

> "Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love
> (A calm earth-goddess crowned with corn and vines)
> On the Mid Sea that moans with memories,
> And on the untravelled Ocean, *whose vast tides*
> *Pant dumbly passionate with dreams of youth.*"

The second half of the fourth line and the fifth, here, seem to me as poor as the others are good. So in the midst of the admirable description of Don Silva, which precedes the first scene in the castle:—

> "A spirit framed
> Too proudly special for obedience,
> Too subtly pondering for mastery:
> Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,
> Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,
> *Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness*
> *And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.*"

The transition to the lines in Italic is like the passage from a well-ventilated room into a vacuum. On reflection, we see "long resonant consciousness" to be a very good term; but, as it stands, it certainly lacks breathing-space. On the other hand,

there are more than enough passages of the character of the following to support what I have said of the genuine splendour of the style:—

"I was right!
These gems have life in them: their colours speak,
Say what words fail of. So do many things,—
The scent of jasmine and the fountain's plash,
The moving shadows on the far-off hills,
The slanting moonlight and our clasping hands.
O Silva, there's an ocean round our words,
That overflows and drowns them. Do you know.
Sometimes when we sit silent, and the air
Breathes gently on us from the orange-trees,
It seems that with the whisper of a word
Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart?
Is it not true?

DON SILVA.

Yes, dearest, it is true.
Speech is but broken light upon the depth
Of the unspoken: even your loved words
Float in the larger meaning of your voice
As something dimmer."

I may say in general, that the author's admirers must have found in *The Spanish Gypsy* a presentment of her various special gifts stronger and fuller, on the whole, than any to be found in her novels. Those who valued her chiefly for her humour—the gentle humour which provokes a

smile, but deprecates a laugh—will recognise that delightful gift in Blasco, and Lorenzo, and Roldan, and Juan,—slighter in quantity than in her prose-writings, but quite equal, I think, in quality. Those who prize most her descriptive powers will see them wondrously well embodied in these pages. As for those who have felt compelled to declare that she possesses the Shakespearian touch, they must consent, with what grace they may, to be disappointed. I have never thought our author a great dramatist, nor even a particularly dramatic writer. A real dramatist, I imagine, could never have reconciled himself to the odd mixture of the narrative and dramatic forms by which the present work is distinguished; and that George Eliot's genius should have needed to work under these conditions seems to me strong evidence of the partial and incomplete character of her dramatic instincts. An English critic lately described her, with much correctness, as a critic rather than a creator of characters. She puts her figures into action very successfully, but on the whole she thinks for them more than they think for themselves. She thinks, however, to wonderfully good purpose. In none of her works are there two more distinctly human representations than the characters of Silva and Juan. The latter, indeed, if I am not mistaken, ranks with Tito Melema and Hetty Sorrel, as one of her very best conceptions.

What is commonly called George Eliot's humour consists largely, I think, in a certain tendency to epigram and compactness of utterance,—not the short-clipped, biting, ironical epigram, but a form of statement in which a liberal dose of truth is embraced in terms none the less comprehensive for being very firm and vivid. Juan says of Zarca that

> "He is one of those
> Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny,
> And make the prophets lie."

Zarca himself, speaking of "the steadfast mind, the undivided will to seek the good," says most admirably,—

> "'Tis that compels the elements, *and wrings*
> *A human music from the indifferent air.*"

When the Prior pronounces Fedalma's blood "unchristian as the leopard's," Don Silva retorts with,—

> "Unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's blood,
> Before the angel spoke the word, 'All hail!'"

Zarca qualifies his daughter's wish to maintain her faith to her lover, at the same time that she embraces her father's fortunes, as

> "A woman's dream,— who thinks by smiling well
> To ripen figs in frost."

This happy brevity of expression is frequently revealed in those rich descriptive passages and touches in which the work abounds. Some of the lines taken singly are excellent:—

"And bells make Catholic the trembling air";

and,

"Sad as the twilight, all his clothes ill-girt";

and again

"Mournful professor of high drollery."

Here is a very good line and a half:—

"The old rain-fretted mountains in their robes
Of shadow-broken gray."

Here, finally, are three admirable pictures:—

"The stars thin-scattered made the heavens large,
Bending in slow procession; in the east,
Emergent from the dark waves of the hills,
Seeming a little sister of the moon,
Glowed Venus all unquenched."

"Spring afternoons, when delicate shadows fall
Pencilled upon the grass; high summer morns,
"When white light rains upon the quiet sea,
And cornfields flush for ripeness."

"Scent the fresh breath of the height-loving herbs,
That, trodden by the pretty parted hoofs

Of nimble goats, sigh at the innocent bruise,
And with a mingled difference exquisite
Pour a sweet burden on the buoyant air."

But now to reach the real substance of the poem, and to allow the reader to appreciate the author's treatment of human character and passion, I must speak briefly of the story. I shall hardly misrepresent it, when I say that it is a very old one, and that it illustrates that very common occurrence in human affairs,—the conflict of love and duty. Such, at least, is the general impression made by the poem as it stands. It is very possible that the author's primary intention may have had a breadth which has been curtailed in the execution of the work,—that it was her wish to present a struggle between nature and culture, between education and the instinct of race. You can detect in such a theme the stuff of a very good drama,—a somewhat stouter stuff, however, than *The Spanish Gypsy* is made of. George Eliot, true to that didactic tendency for which she has hitherto been remarkable, has preferred to make her heroine's predicament a problem in morals, and has thereby, I think, given herself hard work to reach a satisfactory solution. She has, indeed, committed herself to a signal error, in a psychological sense,—that of making a Gypsy girl with a conscience. Either Fedalma was a perfect Zincala in temper and in-

stinct,—in which case her adhesion to her father and her race was a blind, passionate, sensuous movement, which is almost expressly contradicted, —or else she was a pure and intelligent Catholic, in which case nothing in the nature of a struggle can be predicated. The character of Fedalma, I may say, comes very near being a failure,—a very beautiful one; but in point of fact it misses it.

It misses it, I think, thanks to that circumstance which in reading and criticising *The Spanish Gypsy* we must not cease to bear in mind, the fact that the work is emphatically a *romance*. We may contest its being a poem, but we must admit that it is a romance in the fullest sense of the word. Whether the term may be absolutely defined I know not; but we may say of it, comparing it with the novel, that it carries much farther that compromise with reality which is the basis of all imaginative writing. In the romance this principle of compromise pervades the superstructure as well as the basis. The most that we exact is that the fable be consistent with itself. Fedalma is not a real Gypsy maiden. The conviction is strong in the reader's mind that a genuine Spanish Zincala would have somehow contrived both to follow her tribe and to keep her lover. If Fedalma is not real, Zarca is even less so. He is interesting, imposing, picturesque; but he is very far, I take it, from being a genuine *Gypsy* chieftain. They are

both ideal figures,—the offspring of a strong mental desire for creatures well rounded in their elevation and heroism,—creatures who should illustrate the nobleness of human nature divorced from its smallness. Don Silva has decidedly more of the common stuff of human feeling, more charming natural passion and weakness. But he, too, is largely a vision of the intellect; his constitution is adapted to the atmosphere and the climate of romance. Juan, indeed, has one foot well planted on the lower earth; but Juan is only an accessory figure. I have said enough to lead the reader to perceive that the poem should not be regarded as a rigid transcript of actual or possible fact,—that the action goes on in an artificial world, and that properly to comprehend it he must regard it with a generous mind.

Viewed in this manner, as efficient figures in an essentially ideal and romantic drama, Fedalma and Zarca seem to gain vastly, and to shine with a brilliant radiance. If we reduce Fedalma to the level of the heroines of our modern novels, in which the interest aroused by a young girl is in proportion to the similarity of her circumstances to those of the reader, and in which none but the commonest feelings are required, provided they be expressed with energy, we shall be tempted to call her a solemn and cold-blooded jilt. In a novel it would have been next to impossible for the author to make the

heroine renounce her lover. In novels we not only forgive that weakness which is common and familiar and human, but we actually demand it. But in poetry, although we are compelled to adhere to the few elementary passions of our nature, we do our best to dress them in a new and exquisite garb. Men and women in a poetical drama are nothing, if not distinguished.

> "Our dear young love,—its breath was happiness!
> But it had grown upon a larger life,
> Which tore its roots asunder."

These words are uttered by Fedalma at the close of the poem, and in them she emphatically claims the distinction of having her own private interests invaded by those of a people. The manner of her kinship with the Zincali is in fact a very much "larger life" than her marriage with Don Silva. We may, indeed, challenge the probability of her relationship to her tribe impressing her mind with a force equal to that of her love,—her "dear young love." We may declare that this is an unnatural and violent result. For my part, I think it is very far from violent; I think the author has employed her art in reducing the apparently arbitrary quality of her preference for her tribe. I say reducing; I do not say effacing; because it seems to me, as I have intimated, that just at this point her art has been wanting, and we are not sufficiently

prepared for Fedalma's movement by a sense of her Gypsy temper and instincts. Still, we are in some degree prepared for it by various passages in the opening scenes of the book,—by all the magnificent description of her dance in the Plaza:—

> "All gathering influences culminate
> And urge Fedalma. Earth and heaven seem one,
> Life a glad trembling on the outer edge
> Of unknown rapture. Swifter now she moves,
> Filling the measure with a double beat
> And widening circle; now she seems to glow
> With more declaréd presence, glorified.
> Circling, she lightly bends, and lifts on high
> The multitudinous-sounding tambourine,
> And makes it ring and boom, then lifts it higher,
> Stretching her left arm beauteous."

We are better prepared for it, however, than by anything else, by the whole impression we receive of the exquisite refinement and elevation of the young girl's mind,—by all that makes her so bad a Gypsy. She possesses evidently a very high-strung intellect, and her whole conduct is in a higher key, as I may say, than that of ordinary women, or even ordinary heroines. She is natural, I think, in a poetical sense. She is consistent with her own prodigiously superfine character. From a lower point of view than that of the author, she lacks several of the desirable feminine qualities,—a certain womanly warmth and petulance, a grace-

ful irrationality. Her mind is very much too lucid, and her aspirations too lofty. Her conscience, especially, is decidedly over-active. But this is a distinction which she shares with all the author's heroines,—Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Romola, and Esther Lyon,—a distinction, moreover, for which I should be very sorry to hold George Eliot to account. There are most assuredly women and women. While Messrs. Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins, and Miss Braddon and her school, tell one half the story, it is no more than fair that the author of *The Spanish Gypsy* should, all unassisted, attempt to relate the other.

Whenever a story really interests one, he is very fond of paying it the compliment of imagining it otherwise constructed, and of capping it with a different termination. In the present case, one is irresistibly tempted to fancy *The Spanish Gypsy* in prose,—a compact, regular drama: not in George Eliot's prose, however: in a diction much more nervous and heated and rapid, written with short speeches as well as long. (The reader will have observed the want of brevity, retort, interruption, rapid alternation, in the dialogue of the poem. The characters all talk, as it were, standing still.) In such a play as the one indicated one imagines a truly dramatic Fedalma,—a passionate, sensuous, irrational Bohemian, as elegant as good breeding and native good taste could make her,

and as pure as her actual sister in the poem,—but rushing into her father's arms with a cry of joy, and losing the sense of her lover's sorrow in what the author has elsewhere described as "the hurrying ardour of action." Or in the way of a different termination, suppose that Fedalma should for the time value at once her own love and her lover's enough to make her prefer the latter's destiny to that represented by her father. Imagine, then, that, after marriage, the Gypsy blood and nature should begin to flow and throb in quicker pulsations,—and that the poor girl should sadly contrast the sunny freedom and lawless joy of her people's lot with the splendid rigidity and formalism of her own. You may conceive at this point that she should pass from sadness to despair, and from despair to revolt. Here the catastrophe may occur in a dozen different ways. Fedalma may die before her husband's eyes, of unsatisfied longing for the fate she has rejected; or she may make an attempt actually to recover her fate, by wandering off and seeking out her people. The cultivated mind, however, it seems to me, imperiously demands, that, on finally overtaking them, she shall die of mingled weariness and shame, as neither a good Gypsy nor a good Christian, but simply a good figure for a tragedy. But there is a degree of levity which almost amounts to irreverence in

fancying this admirable performance as anything other than it is.

After Fedalma comes Zarca, and here our imagination flags. Not so George Eliot's: for as simple imagination, I think that in the conception of this impressive and unreal figure it appears decidedly at its strongest. With Zarca, we stand at the very heart of the realm of romance. There is a truly grand simplicity, to my mind, in the outline of his character, and a remarkable air of majesty in his poise and attitude. He is a *père noble* in perfection. His speeches have an exquisite eloquence. In strictness, he is to the last degree unreal, illogical, and rhetorical; but a certain dramatic unity is diffused through his character by the depth and energy of the colours in which he is painted. With a little less simplicity, his figure would be decidedly modern. As it stands, it is neither modern nor mediæval; it belongs to the world of intellectual dreams and visions. The reader will admit that it is a vision of no small beauty, the conception of a stalwart chieftain who distils the cold exaltation of his purpose from the utter loneliness and obloquy of his race:—

"Wanderers whom no God took knowledge of,
To give them laws, to fight for them, or blight
Another race to make them ampler room;
A people with no home even in memory,

> No dimmest lore of giant ancestors
> To make a common hearth for piety";

a people all ignorant of

> "The rich heritage, the milder life,
> Of nations fathered by a mighty Past."

Like Don Silva, like Juan, like Sephardo, Zarca is decidedly a man of intellect.

Better than Fedalma or than Zarca is the remarkably beautiful and elaborate portrait of Don Silva, in whom the author has wished to present a young nobleman as splendid in person and in soul as the dawning splendour of his native country. In the composition of his figure, the real and the romantic, brilliancy and pathos, are equally commingled. He cannot be said to stand out in vivid relief. As a piece of painting, there is nothing commanding, aggressive, brutal, as I may say, in his lineaments. But they will bear close scrutiny. Place yourself within the circumscription of the work, breathe its atmosphere, and you will see that Don Silva is portrayed with a delicacy to which English story-tellers, whether in prose or verse, have not accustomed us. There are better portraits in Browning, but there are also worse; in Tennyson there are none as good; and in the other great poets of the present century there are no attempts, that I can remember, to which we may compare it.

In spite of the poem being called in honour of his mistress, Don Silva is in fact the central figure in the work. Much more than Fedalma, he is the passive object of the converging blows of Fate. The young girl, after all, did what was easiest; but he is entangled in a network of agony, without choice or compliance of his own. It is an admirable subject admirably treated. I may describe it by saying that it exhibits a perfect aristocratic nature (born and bred at a time when democratic aspirations were quite irrelevant to happiness), dragged down by no fault of its own into the vulgar mire of error and expiation. The interest which attaches to Don Silva's character revolves about its exquisite human weakness, its manly scepticism, its antipathy to the trenchant, the absolute, and arbitrary. At the opening of the book, the author rehearses his various titles:—

> "Such titles with their blazonry are his
> Who keeps this fortress, sworn Alcaÿde,
> Lord of the valley, master of the town,
> Commanding whom he will, himself commanded
> By Christ his Lord, who sees him from the cross,
> And from bright heaven where the Mother pleads;
> By good Saint James, upon the milk-white steed,
> Who leaves his bliss to fight for chosen Spain;
> By the dead gaze of all his ancestors;
> And by the mystery of his Spanish blood,
> Charged with the awe and glories of the past."

Throughout the poem, we are conscious, during the evolution of his character, of the presence of these high mystical influences, which, combined with his personal pride, his knightly temper, his delicate culture, form a splendid background for passionate dramatic action. The finest pages in the book, to my taste, are those which describe his lonely vigil in the Gypsy camp, after he has failed in winning back Fedalma, and has pledged his faith to Zarca. Placed under guard, and left to his own stern thoughts, his soul begins to react against the hideous disorder to which he has committed it, to proclaim its kinship with "customs and bonds and laws," and its sacred need of the light of human esteem:—

> "Now awful Night,
> Ancestral mystery of mysteries, came down
> Past all the generations of the stars,
> And visited his soul with touch more close
> Than when he kept that closer, briefer watch,
> Under the church's roof, beside his arms,
> And won his knighthood."

To be appreciated at their worth, these pages should be attentively read. Nowhere has the author's marvellous power of expression, the mingled dignity and pliancy of her style, obtained a greater triumph. She has reproduced the expression of a mind with the same vigorous distinctness as that

with which a great painter represents the expression of a countenance.

The character which accords best with my own taste is that of the minstrel Juan, an extremely generous conception. He fills no great part in the drama; he is by nature the reverse of a man of action; and, strictly, the story could very well dispense with him. Yet, for all that, I should be sorry to lose him, and lose thereby the various excellent things which are said of him and by him. I do not include his songs among the latter. Only two of the lyrics in the work strike me as good: the song of Pablo, "The world is great: the birds all fly from me"; and, in a lower degree, the chant of the Zincali, in the fourth book. But I do include the words by which he is introduced to the reader:

—

"Juan was a troubadour revived,
Freshening life's dusty road with babbling rills
Of wit and song, living 'mid harnessed men
With limbs ungalled by armour, ready so
To soothe them weary and to cheer them sad.
Guest at the board, companion in the camp,
A crystal mirror to the life around:
Flashing the comment keen of simple fact
Defined in words; lending brief lyric voice
To grief and sadness; hardly taking note
Of difference betwixt his own and others';
But, rather singing as a listener

To the deep moans, the cries, the wildstrong joys
Of universal Nature, old, yet young."

When Juan talks at his ease, he strikes the note of poetry much more surely than when he lifts his voice in song:—

"Yet if your graciousness will not disdain
A poor plucked songster, shall he sing to you?
Some lay of afternoons,— some ballad strain
Of those who ached once, but are sleeping now
Under the sun-warmed flowers?"

Juan's link of connection with the story is, in the first place, that he is in love with Fedalma, and, in the second, as a piece of local colour. His attitude with regard to Fedalma is indicated with beautiful delicacy:—

"O lady, constancy has kind and rank.
One man's is lordly, plump, and bravely clad,
Holds its head high, and tells the world its name:
Another man's is beggared, must go bare,
And shiver through the world, the jest of all,
But that it puts the motley on, and plays
Itself the jester."

Nor are his merits lost upon her, as she declares, with no small force,—

"No! on the close-thronged spaces of the earth
A battle rages; Fate has carried me
'Mid the thick arrows: I will keep my stand,—

> Nor shrink, and let the shaft pass by my breast
> To pierce another. O, 't is written large,
> The thing I have to do. But you, dear Juan,
> Renounce, endure, are brave, unurged by aught
> Save the sweet overflow of your good-will."

In every human imbroglio, be it of a comic or a tragic nature, it is good to think of an observer standing aloof, the critic, the idle commentator of it all, taking notes, as we may say, in the interest of truth. The exercise of this function is the chief ground of our interest in Juan. Yet as a man of action, too, he once appeals most irresistibly to our sympathies: I mean in the admirable scene with Hinda, in which he wins back his stolen finery by his lute-playing. This scene, which is written in prose, has a simple realistic power which renders it a truly remarkable composition.

Of the different parts of *The Spanish Gypsy* I have spoken with such fullness as my space allows: it remains to add a few remarks upon the work as a whole. Its great fault is simply that it is not a genuine poem. It lacks the hurrying quickness, the palpitating warmth, the bursting melody of such a creation. A genuine poem is a tree that breaks into blossom and shakes in the wind. George Eliot's elaborate composition is like a vast mural design in mosaic-work, where great slabs and delicate morsels of stone are laid together with wonderful art, where there are plenty of noble lines

and generous hues, but where everything is rigid, measured, and cold,—nothing dazzling, magical, and vocal. The poem contains a number of faulty lines,—lines of twelve, of eleven, and of eight syllables,—of which it is easy to suppose that a more sacredly commissioned versifier would not have been guilty. Occasionally, in the search for poetic effect, the author decidedly misses her way:—

> "All her being paused
> In resolution, *as some leonine wave,*" etc.

A "leonine" wave is rather to much of a lion and too little of a wave. The work possesses imagination, I think, in no small measure. The description of Silva's feelings during his sojourn in the Gypsy camp is strongly pervaded by it; or if perchance the author achieved these passages without rising on the wings of fancy, her glory is all the greater. But the poem is wanting in passion. The reader is annoyed by a perpetual sense of effort and of intellectual tension. It is a characteristic of George Eliot, I imagine, to allow her impressions to linger a long time in her mind, so that by the time they are ready for use they have lost much of their original freshness and vigour. They have acquired, of course, a number of artificial charms, but they have parted with their primal natural simplicity. In this poem we see the landscape, the people, the manners of Spain as through a glass

smoked by the flame of meditative vigils, just as we saw the outward aspect of Florence in *Romola.* The brightness of colouring is there, the artful chiaroscuro, and all the consecrated properties of the scene; but they gleam in an artificial light. The background of the action is admirable in spots, but is cold and mechanical as a whole. The immense rhetorical ingenuity and elegance of the work, which constitute its main distinction, interfere with the faithful, uncompromising reflection of the primary elements of the subject.

The great merit of the characters is that they are marvellously well *understood,*—far better understood than in the ordinary picturesque romance of action, adventure, and mystery. And yet they are not understood to the bottom; they retain an indefinably factitious air, which is not sufficiently justified by their position as ideal figures. The reader who has attentively read the closing scene of the poem will know what I mean. The scene shows remarkable talent; it is eloquent, it is beautiful; but it is arbitrary and fanciful, more than unreal,—untrue. The reader silently chafes and protests, and finally breaks forth and cries, "O for a blast from the outer world!" Silva and Fedalma have developed themselves so daintily and elaborately within the close-sealed precincts of the author's mind, that they strike us at last as acting not as simple human creatures, but as downright *amateurs*

of the morally graceful and picturesque. To say that this is the ultimate impression of the poem is to say that it is not a great work. It is in fact not a great drama. It is, in the first place, an admirable study of character,—an essay, as they say, toward the solution of a given problem in conduct. In the second, it is a noble literary performance. It can be read neither without interest in the former respect, nor without profit for its signal merits of style,—and this in spite of the fact that the versification is, as the French say, as little *réussi* as was to be expected in a writer beginning at a bound with a kind of verse which is very much more difficult than even the best prose,—the author's own prose. I shall indicate most of its merits and defects, great and small, if I say it is a romance,—a romance written by one who is emphatically a thinker.

II. THE LEGEND OF JUBAL AND OTHER POEMS

When the author of *Middlemarch* published, some years since, her first volume of verse, the reader, in trying to judge it fairly, asked himself what he should think of it if she had never published a line of prose. The question, perhaps, was not altogether a help to strict fairness of judgment, but the author was protected from illiberal conclusions by the fact that, practically, it was im-

possible to answer it. George Eliot belongs to that class of pre-eminent writers in relation to whom the imagination comes to self-consciousness only to find itself in subjection. It was impossible to disengage one's judgment from the permanent influence of *Adam Bede* and its companions, and it was necessary, from the moment that the author undertook to play the poet's part, to feel that her genius was all of one piece.

People have often asked themselves how they would estimate Shakespeare if they knew him only by his comedies, Homer if his name stood only for the *Odyssey*, and Milton if he had written nothing but "Lycidas" and the shorter pieces. The question of necessity, inevitable though it is, leads to nothing. George Eliot is neither Homer nor Shakespeare nor Milton; but her work, like theirs, is a massive achievement, divided into a supremely good and a less good, and it provokes us, like theirs, to the fruitless attempt to estimate the latter portion on its own merits alone.

The little volume before us gives us another opportunity; but here, as before, we find ourselves uncomfortably divided between the fear, on the one hand, of being bribed into favour, and, on the other, of giving short measure of it. The author's verses are a narrow manifestation of her genius, but they are an unmistakeable manifestation. *Middlemarch* has made us demand even finer

things of her than we did before, and whether, as patented readers of *Middlemarch,* we like "Jubal" and its companions the less or the more, we must admit that they are characteristic products of the same intellect.

We imagine George Eliot is quite philosopher enough, having produced her poems mainly as a kind of experimental entertainment for her own mind, to let them commend themselves to the public on any grounds whatever which will help to illustrate the workings of versatile intelligence,—as interesting failures, if nothing better. She must feel they are interesting; an exaggerated modesty cannot deny that.

We have found them extremely so. They consist of a rhymed narrative, of some length, of the career of Jubal, the legendary inventor of the lyre; of a short rustic idyl in blank verse on a theme gathered in the Black Forest of Baden; of a tale, versified in rhyme, from Boccaccio; and of a series of dramatic scenes called "Armgart,"—the best thing, to our sense, of the four. To these are added a few shorter pieces, chiefly in blank verse, each of which seems to us proportionately more successful than the more ambitious ones. Our author's verse is a mixture of spontaneity of thought and excessive reflectiveness of expression and its value is generally more in the idea than in the form. In whatever George Eliot writes you have the com-

fortable certainty, infrequent in other quarters, of finding an idea, and you get the substance of her thought in the short poems, without the somewhat rigid envelope of her poetic diction.

If we may say, broadly, that the supreme merit of a poem is in having warmth, and that it is less and less valuable in proportion as it cools by too long waiting upon either fastidious skill or inefficient skill, the little group of verses entitled "Brother and Sister" deserve our preference. They have extreme loveliness, and the feeling they so abundantly express is of a much less intellectualised sort than that which prevails in the other poems. It is seldom that one of our author's compositions concludes upon so simply sentimental a note as the last lines of "Brother and Sister":—

> "But were another childhood-world my share,
> I would be born a little sister there!"

This will be interesting to many readers as proceeding more directly from the writer's personal experience than anything else they remember. George Eliot's is a personality so enveloped in the mists of reflection that it is an uncommon sensation to find one's self in immediate contact with it. This charming poem, too, throws a grateful light on some of the best pages the author has written,—those in which she describes her heroine's childish years in *The Mill on the Floss*. The finest thing in

that admirable novel has always been, to our taste, not its portrayal of the young girl's love-struggles as regards her lover, but those as regards her brother. The former are fiction,—skilful fiction; but the latter are warm reality, and the merit of the verses we speak of is that they are coloured from the same source.

In "Stradivarius," the famous old violin-maker affirms in every pregnant phrase the supreme duty of being perfect in one's labour, and lays down the dictum, which should be the first article in every artist's faith:—

> "'Tis God gives skill,
> But not without men's hands: He could not make
> Antonio Stradivari's violins
> Without Antonio."

This is the only really inspiring working-creed, and our author's utterance of it justifies her claim to having the distinctively artistic mind, more forcibly than her not infrequent shortcomings in the direction of an artistic *ensemble*.

Many persons will probably pronounce "A Minor Prophet" the gem of this little collection, and it is certainly interesting, for a great many reasons. It may seem to characterise the author on a number of sides. It illustrates vividly, in the extraordinary ingenuity and flexibility of its diction, her extreme provocation to indulge in the verbal licence

of verse. It reads almost like a close imitation of Browning, the great master of the poetical grotesque, except that it observes a discretion which the poet of *Red-Cotton Night-caps* long ago threw overboard. When one can say neat things with such rhythmic felicity, why not attempt it, even if one has at one's command the magnificent vehicle of the style of *Middlemarch?*

The poem is a kindly satire upon the views and the person of an American vegetarian, a certain Elias Baptist Butterworth,—a gentleman, presumably, who under another name, as an evening caller, has not a little retarded the flight of time for the author. Mr. Browning has written nothing better than the account of the Butterworthian "Thought Atmosphere":—

> "And when all earth is vegetarian,
> When, lacking butchers, quadrupeds die out,
> And less Thought-atmosphere is re-absorbed
> By nerves of insects parasitical,
> Those higher truths, seized now by higher minds,
> But not expressed (the insects hindering),
> Will either flash out into eloquence,
> Or, better still, be comprehensible,
> By rappings simply, without need of roots."

The author proceeds to give a sketch of the beatific state of things under the vegetarian *régime* prophesied by her friend in

"Mildly nasal tones,
And vowels stretched to suit the widest views."

How, for instance,

"Sahara will be populous
With families of gentlemen retired
From commerce in more Central Africa,
Who order coolness, as we order coal,
And have a lobe anterior strong enough
To think away the sand-storms."

Or how, as water is probably a non-conductor of the Thought-atmosphere,

"Fishes may lead carnivorous lives obscure,
But must not dream of culinary rank
Or being dished in good society."

Then follows the author's own melancholy head-shake and her reflections on the theme that there can be no easy millennium, and that

"Bitterly
I feel that every change upon this earth
Is bought with sacrifice";

and that, even if Mr. Butterworth's axioms were not too good to be true, one might deprecate them in the interest of that happiness which is associated with error that is deeply familiar. Human improvement, she concludes, is something both larger and smaller than the vegetarian bliss, and consists

less in a realised perfection than in the sublime dissatisfaction of generous souls with the shortcomings of the actual. All this is unfolded in verse which, if without the absolute pulse of spontaneity, has at least something that closely resembles it. It has very fine passages.

Very fine, too, both in passages and as a whole, is "The Legend of Jubal." It is noteworthy, by the way, that three of these poems are on themes connected with music; and yet we remember no representation of a musician among the multitudinous figures which people the author's novels. But George Eliot, we take it, has the musical sense in no small degree, and the origin of melody and harmony is here described in some very picturesque and sustained poetry.

Jubal invents the lyre and teaches his companions and his tribe how to use it, and then goes forth to wander in quest of new musical inspiration. In this pursuit he grows patriarchally old, and at last makes his way back to his own people. He finds them, greatly advanced in civilisation, celebrating what we should call nowadays his centennial, and making his name the refrain of their songs. He goes in among them and declares himself, but they receive him as a lunatic, and buffet him, and thrust him out into the wilderness again, where he succumbs to their unconscious ingratitude.

"The immortal name of Jubal filled the sky,
While Jubal, lonely, laid him down to die."

In his last hour he has a kind of metaphysical vision which consoles him, and enables him to die contented. A mystic voice assures him that he has no cause for complaint; that his use to mankind was everything, and his credit and glory nothing; that being rich in his genius, it was his part to give, gratuitously, to unendowed humanity; and that the knowledge of his having become a part of man's joy, and an image in man's soul, should reconcile him to the prospect of lying senseless in the tomb. Jubal assents, and expires.

"A quenched sun-wave,
The all-creating Presence for his grave."

This is very noble and heroic doctrine, and is enforced in verse not unworthy of it for having a certain air of strain and effort; for surely it is not doctrine that the egoistic heart rises to without some experimental flutter of the wings. It is the expression of a pessimistic philosophy which pivots upon itself only in the face of a really formidable ultimatum. We cordially accept it, however, and are tolerably confident that the artist in general, in his death-throes, will find less repose in the idea of a heavenly compensation for earthly

neglect than in the certainty that humanity is really assimilating his productions.

"Agatha" is slighter in sentiment than its companions, and has the vague aroma of an idea rather than the positive weight of thought. It is very graceful. "How Lisa loved the King" seems to us to have, more than its companions, the easy flow and abundance of prime poetry; it wears a reflection of the incomparable naturalness of its model in the *Decameron*. "Armgart" we have found extremely interesting, although perhaps it offers plainest proof of what the author sacrifices in renouncing prose. The drama, in prose, would have been vividly dramatic, while, as it stands, we have merely a situation contemplated, rather than unfolded, in a dramatic light. A great singer loses her voice, and a patronising nobleman, who, before the calamity, had wished her to become his wife, retire from the stage, and employ her genius for the beguilement of private life, finds that he has urgent business in another neighbourhood, and that he has not the mission to espouse her misfortune. Armgart rails tremendously at fate, often in very striking phrase. The Count of course, in bidding her farewell, has hoped that time will soften her disappointment:—

> "That empty cup so neatly ciphered, 'Time,'
> Handed me as a cordial for despair.

> Time — what a word to fling in charity!
> Bland, neutral word for slow, dull-beating pain,—
> Days, months, and years!"

We must refer the reader to the poem itself for knowledge how resignation comes to so bitter a pain as the mutilation of conscious genius. It comes to Armgart because she is a very superior girl; and though her outline, here, is at once rather sketchy and rather rigid, she may be added to that group of magnificently generous women,—the Dinahs, the Maggies, the Romolas, the Dorotheas,— the representation of whom is our author's chief title to our gratitude. But in spite of Armgart's resignation, the moral atmosphere of the poem, like that of most of the others and like that of most of George Eliot's writings, is an almost gratuitously sad one.

It would take more space than we can command to say how it is that at this and at other points our author strikes us as a spirit mysteriously perverted from her natural temper. We have a feeling that, both intellectually and morally, her genius is essentially of a simpler order than most of her recent manifestations of it. Intellectually, it has run to epigram and polished cleverness, and morally to a sort of conscious and ambitious scepticism, with which it only half commingles. The interesting thing would be to trace the moral divergence from the characteristic type. At bottom, according to

this notion, the author of *Romola* and *Middlemarch* has an ardent desire and faculty for positive, active, constructive belief of the old-fashioned kind, but she has fallen upon a critical age and felt its contagion and dominion. If, with her magnificent gifts, she had been borne by the mighty general current in the direction of passionate faith, we often think that she would have achieved something incalculably great.

THE LIMITATIONS OF DICKENS

A review of *Our Mutual Friend.* By Charles Dickens. New York: Harper Brothers. 1865. Originally published in *The Nation,* December 21, 1865.

THE LIMITATIONS OF DICKENS

OUR Mutual Friend is, to our perception, the poorest of Mr. Dickens's works. And it is poor with the poverty not of momentary embarrassment, but of permanent exhaustion. It is wanting in inspiration. For the last ten years it has seemed to us that Mr. Dickens has been unmistakeably forcing himself. *Bleak House* was forced; *Little Dorrit* was laboured; the present work is dug out as with a spade and pickaxe.

Of course—to anticipate the usual argument—who but Dickens could have written it? Who, indeed? Who else would have established a lady in business in a novel on the admirably solid basis of her always putting on gloves and tying a handkerchief around her head in moments of grief, and of her habitually addressing her family with "Peace! hold!" It is needless to say that Mrs. Reginald Wilfer is first and last the occasion of considerable true humour. When, after conducting her daughter to Mrs. Boffin's carriage, in sight of all the envious neighbours, she is described as enjoying her triumph during the next quarter of an hour by airing herself on the doorstep "in a kind of

splendidly serene trance," we laugh with as uncritical a laugh as could be desired of us. We pay the same tribute to her assertions, as she narrates the glories of the society she enjoyed at her father's table, that she has known as many as three copperplate engravers exchanging the most exquisite sallies and retorts there at one time. But when to these we have added a dozen more happy examples of the humour which was exhaled from every line of Mr. Dickens's earlier writings, we shall have closed the list of the merits of the work before us.

To say that the conduct of the story, with all its complications, betrays a long-practised hand, is to pay no compliment worthy the author. If this were, indeed, a compliment, we should be inclined to carry it further, and congratulate him on his success in what we should call the manufacture of fiction; for in so doing we should express a feeling that has attended us throughout the book. Seldom, we reflected, had we read a book so intensely *written,* so little seen, known, or felt.

In all Mr. Dickens's works the fantastic has been his great resource; and while his fancy was lively and vigorous it accomplished great things. But the fantastic, when the fancy is dead, is a very poor business. The movement of Mr. Dickens's fancy in Mr. Wilfer and Mr. Boffin and Lady Tippins, and the Lammles and Miss Wren, and

even in Eugene Wrayburn, is, to our mind, a movement lifeless, forced, mechanical. It is the letter of his old humour without the spirit. It is hardly too much to say that every character here put before us is a mere bundle of eccentricities, animated by no principle of nature whatever.

In former days there reigned in Mr. Dickens's extravagances a comparative consistency; they were exaggerated statements of types that really existed. We had, perhaps, never known a Newman Noggs, nor a Pecksniff, nor a Micawber; but we had known persons of whom these figures were but the strictly logical consummation. But among the grotesque creatures who occupy the pages before us, there is not one whom we can refer to as an existing type. In all Mr. Dickens's stories, indeed, the reader has been called upon, and has willingly consented, to accept a certain number of figures or creatures of pure fancy, for this was the author's poetry. He was, moreover, always repaid for his concession by a peculiar beauty or power in these exceptional characters. But he is now expected to make the same concession, with a very inadequate reward.

What do we get in return for accepting Miss Jenny Wren as a possible person? This young lady is the type of a certain class of characters of which Mr. Dickens has made a specialty, and with which he has been accustomed to draw alternate

smiles and tears, according as he pressed one spring or another. But this is very cheap merriment and very cheap pathos. Miss Jenny Wren is a poor little dwarf, afflicted as she constantly reiterates, with a "bad back" and "queer legs," who makes doll's dresses, and is for ever pricking at those with whom she converses in the air, with her needle, and assuring them that she knows their "tricks and their manners." Like all Mr. Dickens's pathetic characters, she is a little monster; she is deformed, unhealthy, unnatural; she belongs to the troop of hunchbacks, imbeciles, and precocious children who have carried on the sentimental business in all Mr. Dickens's novels; the little Nells, the Smikes, the Paul Dombeys.

Mr. Dickens goes as far out of the way for his wicked people as he does for his good ones. Rogue Riderhood, indeed, in the present story, is villainous with a sufficiently natural villainy; he belongs to that quarter of society in which the author is most at his ease. But was there ever such wickedness as that of the Lammles and Mr. Fledgeby? Not that people have not been as mischievous as they; but was any one ever mischievous in that singular fashion? Did a couple of elegant swindlers ever take such particular pains to be aggressively inhuman?—for we can find no other word for the gratuitous distortions to which they are subjected. The word *humanity* strikes us as

strangely discordant, in the midst of these pages; for, let us boldly declare it, there is no humanity here.

Humanity is nearer home than the Boffins, and the Lammles, and the Wilfers, and the Veneerings. It is in what men have in common with each other, and not what they have in distinction. The people just named have nothing in common with each other, except the fact that they have nothing in common with mankind at large. What a world were this world if the world of *Our Mutual Friend* were an honest reflection of it! But a community of eccentrics is impossible. Rules alone are consistent with each other; exceptions are inconsistent. Society is maintained by natural sense and natural feeling. We cannot conceive a society in which these principles are not in some manner represented. Where in these pages are the depositaries of that intelligence without which the movement of life would cease? Who represents nature?

Accepting half of Mr. Dickens's persons as intentionally grotesque, where are those examplars of sound humanity who should afford us the proper measure of their companions' variations? We ought not, in justice to the author, to seek them among his weaker—that is, his mere conventional—characters; in John Harmon, Lizzie Hexam, or Mortimer Lightwood; but we assuredly

cannot find them among his stronger—that is, his artificial creations.

Suppose we take Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone. They occupy a half-way position between the habitual probable of nature and the habitual impossible of Mr. Dickens. A large portion of the story rests upon the enmity borne by Headstone to Wrayburn, both being in love with the same woman. Wrayburn is a gentleman, and Headstone is one of the people. Wrayburn is well-bred, careless, elegant, sceptical, and idle: Headstone is a high-tempered, hard-working, ambitious young schoolmaster. There lay in the opposition of these two characters a very good story. But the prime requisite was that they should *be* characters: Mr. Dickens, according to his usual plan, has made them simply figures, and between them the story that was to be, the story that should have been, has evaporated. Wrayburn lounges about with his hands in his pockets, smoking a cigar, and talking nonsense. Headstone strides about, clenching his fists and biting his lips and grasping his stick.

There is one scene in which Wrayburn chaffs the schoolmaster with easy insolence, while the latter writhes impotently under his well-bred sarcasm. This scene is very clever, but it is very insufficient. If the majority of readers were not so very timid in the use of words we should call it vulgar. By

this we do not mean to indicate the conventional impropriety of two gentlemen exchanging lively personalities; we mean to emphasise the essentially small character of these personalities. In other words, the moment, dramatically, is great, while the author's conception is weak. The friction of two *men*, of two characters, of two passions, produces stronger sparks than Wrayburn's boyish repartees and Headstone's melodramatic commonplaces.

Such scenes as this are useful in fixing the limits of Mr. Dickens's insight. Insight is, perhaps, too strong a word; for we are convinced that it is one of the chief conditions of his genius not to see beneath the surface of things. If we might hazard a definition of his literary character, we should, accordingly, call him the greatest of superficial novelists. We are aware that this definition confines him to an inferior rank in the department of letters which he adorns; but we accept this consequence of our proposition. It were, in our opinion, an offence against humanity to place Mr. Dickens among the greatest novelists. For, to repeat what we have already intimated, he has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character. He is master of but two alternatives: he reconciles us to what is commonplace, and he reconciles us to what is odd. The value of the former service is questionable;

and the manner in which Mr. Dickens performs it sometimes conveys a certain impression of charlatanism. The value of the latter service is incontestable, and here Mr. Dickens is an honest, an admirable artist.

But what is the condition of the truly great novelist? For him there are no alternatives, for him there are no oddities, for him there is nothing outside of humanity. He cannot shirk it; it imposes itself upon him. For him alone, therefore, there is a true and a false; for him alone, it is possible to be right, because it is possible to be wrong. Mr. Dickens is a great observer and a great humourist, but he is nothing of a philosopher.

Some people may hereupon say, so much the better; we say, so much the worse. For a novelist very soon has need of a little philosophy. In treating of Micawber, and Boffin, and Pickwick, *et hoc genus omne,* he can, indeed, dispense with it, for this—we say it with all deference—is not serious writing. But when he comes to tell the story of a passion, a story like that of Headstone and Wrayburn, he becomes a moralist as well as an artist. He must know *man* as well as *men,* and to know man is to be a philosopher.

The writer who knows men alone, if he have Mr. Dickens's humour and fancy, will give us figures and pictures for which we cannot be too grateful, for he will enlarge our knowledge of the world.

But when he introduces men and women whose interest is preconceived to lie not in the poverty, the weakness, the drollery of their natures, but in their complete and unconscious subjection to ordinary and healthy human emotions, all his humour, all his fancy, will avail him nothing if, out of the fullness of his sympathy, he is unable to prosecute those generalisations in which alone consists the real greatness of a work of art.

This may sound like very subtle talk about a very simple matter. It is rather very simple talk about a very subtle matter. A story based upon those elementary passions in which alone we seek the true and final manifestation of character must be told in a spirit of intellectual superiority to those passions. That is, the author must understand what he is talking about. The perusal of a story so told is one of the most elevating experiences within the reach of the human mind. The perusal of a story which is not so told is infinitely depressing and unprofitable.

TENNYSON'S DRAMA

I. A review of *Queen Mary. A Drama.* By Alfred Tennyson. Boston: J. R. Osgood. 1875. Originally published in *The Galaxy,* September, 1875.

Queen Mary was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1876. Mr. Irving playing the part of Philip II. It was Tennyson's wish that he should appear as Cardinal Pole, but in the acting version that character was eliminated. The part of Philip has been immortalized by Whistler's celebrated painting of Irving in that rôle. Ed.

II. A review of *Harold: A Drama.* By Alfred Tennyson. London. 1877. Originally published in *The Nation,* January 18, 1877.

TENNYSON'S DRAMA

I. QUEEN MARY

A NEW poem by Mr. Tennyson is certain to be largely criticised, and if the new poem is a drama, the performance must be a great event for criticism as well as for poetry. Great surprise, great hopes, and great fears had been called into being by the announcement that the author of so many finely musical lyrics and finished, chiselled specimens of narrative verse, had tempted fortune in the perilous field of the drama.

Few poets seemed less dramatic than Tennyson, even in his most dramatic attempts—in "Maud," in "Enoch Arden," or in certain of the *Idyls of the King*. He had never used the dramatic form, even by snatches; and though no critic was qualified to affirm that he had no slumbering ambition in that direction, it seemed likely that a poet who had apparently passed the meridian of his power had nothing absolutely new to show us. On the other hand, if he had for years been keeping a gift in reserve, and suffering it to ripen and mellow in some deep corner of his genius,

while shallower tendencies waxed and waned above it, it was not unjust to expect that the consummate fruit would prove magnificent.

On the whole, we think that doubt was uppermost in the minds of those persons who to a lively appreciation of the author of "Maud" added a vivid conception of the exigencies of the drama. But at last *Queen Mary* appeared, and conjecture was able to merge itself in knowledge. There was a momentary interval, during which we all read, among the cable telegrams in the newspapers, that the London *Times* affirmed the new drama to contain more "true fire" than anything since Shakespeare had laid down the pen. This gave an edge to our impatience; for "fire," true or false, was not what the Laureate's admirers had hitherto claimed for him. In a day or two, however, most people had the work in their hands.

Every one, it seems to us, has been justified—those who hoped (that is, expected), those who feared, and those who were mainly surprised. *Queen Mary* is both better and less good than was to have been supposed, and both in its merits and its defects it is extremely singular. It is the least Tennysonian of all the author's productions; and we may say that he has not so much refuted as evaded the charge that he is not a dramatic poet. To produce his drama he has had to cease to be himself. Even if *Queen Mary,* as a drama, had

many more than its actual faults, this fact alone—this extraordinary defeasance by the poet of his familiar identity—would make it a remarkable work.

We know of few similar phenomena in the history of literature—few such examples of rupture with a consecrated past. Poets in their prime have groped and experimented, tried this and that, and finally made a great success in a very different vein from that in which they had found their early successes. But the writers in prose or in verse are few who, after a lifetime spent in elaborating and perfecting a certain definite and extremely characteristic manner, have at Mr. Tennyson's age suddenly dismissed it from use and stood forth clad from head to foot in a disguise without a flaw. We are sure that the other great English poet—the author of "The Ring and the Book,"—would be quite incapable of any such feat. The more's the pity, as many of his readers will say!

Queen Mary is upward of three hundred pages long; and yet in all these three hundred pages there is hardly a trace of the Tennyson we know. Of course the reader is on the watch for reminders of the writer he has greatly loved; and of course, vivid signs being absent, he finds a certain eloquence in the slightest intimations. When he reads that

——"that same tide
Which, coming with our coming, seemed to smile
And sparkle like our fortune as thou saidest,
Ran sunless down and moaned against the piers,"

he seems for a moment to detect the peculiar note and rhythm of "Enoch Arden" or "The Princess." Just preceding these, indeed, is a line which seems Tennysonian because it is in a poem by Tennyson:

"Last night I climbed into the gate-house, Brett,
And scared the gray old porter and his wife."

In such touches as these the Tennysonian note is faintly struck; but if the poem were unsigned, they would not do much toward pointing out the author. On the other hand, the fine passages in *Queen Mary* are conspicuously deficient in those peculiar cadences—that exquisite perfume of diction—which every young poet of the day has had his hour of imitating. We may give as an example Pole's striking denial of the charge that the Church of Rome has ever known trepidation:

"What, my Lord!
The Church on Petra's rock? Never! I have seen
A pine in Italy that cast its shadow
Athwart a cataract; firm stood the pine—
The cataract shook the shadow. To my mind
The cataract typed the headlong plunge and fall
Of heresy to the pit: the pine was Rome.

You see, my Lords,
It was the shadow of the Church that trembled."

This reads like Tennyson doing his best not to be Tennyson, and very fairly succeeding. Well as he succeeds, however, and admirably skilful and clever as is his attempt throughout to play tricks with his old habits of language, and prove that he was not the slave but the master of the classic Tennysonian rhythm, I think that few readers can fail to ask themselves whether the new gift is of equal value with the old. The question will perhaps set them to fingering over the nearest volume of the poet at hand, to refresh their memory of his ancient magic. It has rendered the present writer this service, and he feels as if it were a considerable one. Every great poet has something that he does supremely well, and when you come upon Tennyson at his best you feel that you are dealing with poetry at its highest. One of the best passages in *Queen Mary*—the only one, it seems to me, very sensibly warmed by the "fire" commemorated by the London *Times*—is the passionate monologue of Mary when she feels what she supposes to be the intimations of maternity:

"He hath awaked, he hath awaked!
He stirs within the darkness!
Oh Philip, husband! how thy love to mine
Will cling more close, and those bleak manners thaw,

That make me shamed and tongue-tied in my love.
The second Prince of Peace —
The great unborn defender of the Faith,
Who will avenge me of mine enemies —
He comes, and my star rises.
The stormy Wyatts and Northumberlands
And proud ambitions of Elizabeth,
And all her fiercest partisans, are pale
Before my star!
His sceptre shall go forth from Ind to Ind!
His sword shall hew the heretic peoples down!
His faith shall clothe the world that will be his,
Like universal air and sunshine! Open,
Ye everlasting gates! The King is here!—
My star, my son!"

That is very fine, and its broken verses and uneven movement have great felicity and suggestiveness. But their magic is as nothing, surely, to the magic of such a passage as this:

"Yet hold me not for ever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, where the stream
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me and restore me to the ground;
Thou seëst all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;

I, earth in earth, forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels."

In these beautiful lines from "Tithonus" there is a purity of tone, an inspiration, a something sublime and exquisite, which is easily within the compass of Mr. Tennyson's usual manner at its highest, but which is not easily achieved by any really dramatic verse. It is poised and stationary, like a bird whose wings have borne him high, but the beauty of whose movement is less in great ethereal sweeps and circles than in the way he hangs motionless in the blue air, with only a vague tremor of his pinions. Even if the idea with Tennyson were more largely dramatic than it usually is, the immobility, as we must call it, of his phrase would always defeat the dramatic intention. When he wishes to represent movement, the phrase always seems to me to pause and slowly pivot upon itself, or at most to move backward. I do not know whether the reader recognizes the peculiarity to which I allude; one has only to open Tennyson almost at random to find an example of it:

"For once when Arthur, walking all alone,
Vext at a rumour rife about the Queen,
Had met her, Vivien being greeted fair,
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood
With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,
And fluttered adoration."

That perhaps is a subtle illustration; the allusion to Teolin's dog in "Aylmer's Field" is a franker one:

> ——"his old Newfoundlands, when they ran
> To lose him at the stables; for he rose,
> Two-footed, at the limit of his chain,
> Roaring to make a third."

What these pictures present is not the action itself, but the poet's complex perception of it; it seems hardly more vivid and genuine than the sustained posturings of brilliant *tableaux vivants.* With the poets who are natural chroniclers of movement, the words fall into their places as with some throw of the dice, which fortune should always favour. With Scott and Byron they leap into the verse *à pieds joints,* and shake it with their coming; with Tennyson they arrive slowly and settle cautiously into their attitudes, after having well scanned the locality. In consequence they are generally exquisite, and make exquisite combinations; but the result is intellectual poetry and not passionate—poetry which, if the term is not too pedantic, one may qualify as static poetry. Any scene of violence represented by Tennyson is always singularly limited and compressed; it is reduced to a few elements—refined to a single statuesque episode. There are, for example, several descriptions of tournaments and combats in

the *Idyls of the King*. They are all most beautiful, but they are all curiously delicate. One gets no sense of the din and shock of battle; one seems to be looking at a bas relief of two contesting knights in chiselled silver, on a priceless piece of plate. They belong to the same family as that charming description, in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, of the sylvan dance of Donatello and Miriam in the Borghese gardens. Hawthorne talks of the freedom and frankness of their mirth and revelry; what we seem to see is a solemn frieze in stone along the base of a monument. These are the natural fruits of geniuses who are of the brooding rather than the impulsive order. I do not mean to say that here and there Tennyson does not give us a couplet in which motion seems reflected without being made to tarry. I open "Enoch Arden" at hazard, and I read of Enoch's ship that

> ——"at first indeed
> Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
> Scarce rocking, her full-busted figure-head
> Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her bows."

I turn the page and read of

> "The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean fowl,
> The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
> The moving whisper of huge trees that branched
> And blossomed in the zenith";

of

"The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing Ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise."

These lines represent movement on the grand natural scale—taking place in that measured, majestic fashion which, at any given moment, seems identical with permanence. One is almost ashamed to quote Tennyson; one can hardly lay one's hand on a passage that does not form part of the common stock of reference and recitation. Passages of the more impulsive and spontaneous kind will of course chiefly be found in his lyrics and rhymed verses (though rhyme would at first seem but another check upon his freedom); and passages of the kind to which I have been calling attention, chiefly in his narrative poems, in the *Idyls* generally, and especially in the later ones, while the words strike one as having been pondered and collated with an almost miserly care.

But a man has always the qualities of his defects, and if Tennyson is what I have called a static poet, he at least represents repose and still-

ness and the fixedness of things, with a splendour that no poet has surpassed. We all of this generation have lived in such intimacy with him, and made him so much part of our regular intellectual meat and drink, that it requires a certain effort to hold him off at the proper distance for scanning him. We need to cease mechanically murmuring his lines, so that we may hear them speak for themselves.

Few persons who have grown up within the last forty years but have passed through the regular Tennysonian phase; happy few who have paid it a merely passive tribute, and not been moved to commit their emotions to philosophic verse, in the metre of "In Memoriam"! The phase has lasted longer with some persons than with others; but it will not be denied that with the generation at large it has visibly declined. The young persons of twenty now read Tennyson (though, as we imagine, with a fervour less intense than that which prevailed twenty years ago); but the young persons of thirty read Browning and Dante Rossetti, and Omar Kheyam—and are also sometimes heard to complain that poetry is dead and that there is nothing nowadays to read.

We have heard Tennyson called "dainty" so often, we have seen so many allusions to the "Tennysonian trick," we have been so struck, in a certain way, with M. Taine's remarkable portrait of

the poet, in contrast to that of Alfred de Musset, that every one who has anything of a notion of keeping abreast of what is called the "culture of the time" is rather shy of making an explicit, or even a serious profession of admiration for his earlier idol. It has long been the fashion to praise Byron, if one praises him at all, with an apologetic smile; and Tennyson has been, I think, in a measure, tacitly classed with the author of "Childe Harold" as a poet whom one thinks most of while one's taste is immature.

This is natural enough, I suppose, and the taste of the day must travel to its opportunity's end. But I do not believe that Byron has passed, by any means, and I do not think that Tennyson has been proved to be a secondary or a tertiary poet. If he is not in the front rank, it is hard to see what it is that constitutes exquisite quality. There are poets of a larger compass; he has not the passion of Shelley nor the transcendent meditation of Wordsworth; but his inspiration, in its own current, is surely as pure as theirs. He depicts the assured beauties of life, the things that civilisation has gained and permeated, and he does it with an ineffable delicacy of imagination. Only once, as it seems to me (at the close of "Maud"), has he struck the note of irrepressible emotion, and appeared to say the thing that must be said at the moment, at any cost. For the rest, his verse is the

verse of leisure, of luxury, of contemplation, of a faculty that circumstances have helped to become fastidious; but this leaves it a wide province—a province that it fills with a sovereign splendour.

When a poet is such an artist as Tennyson, such an unfaltering, consummate master, it is no shame to surrender one's self to his spell. Reading him over here and there, as I have been doing, I have received an extraordinary impression of talent—talent ripened and refined, and passed, with a hundred incantations, through the crucible of taste. The reader is in thoroughly good company, and if the language is to a certain extent that of a coterie, the coterie can offer convincing evidence of its right to be exclusive. Its own tone is exquisite; listen to it, and you will desire nothing more.

Tennyson's various *Idyls* have been in some degree discredited by insincere imitations, and in some degree, perhaps, by an inevitable lapse of sympathy on the part of some people from what appears their falsetto pitch. That King Arthur, in the great ones of the series, is rather a prig, and that he couldn't have been all the poet represents him without being a good deal of a hypocrite; that the poet himself is too monotonously unctuous, and that in relating the misdeeds of Launcelot and Guinevere he seems, like the lady in the play in "Hamlet," to "protest too much" for wholesomeness—all this has been often said, and said with abundant force. But

there is a way of reading the *Idyls,* one and all, and simply enjoying them. It has been, just now, the way of the writer of these lines; he does not exactly know what may be gained by taking the other way, but he feels as if there were a pitiful loss in not taking this one. If one surrenders one's sense to their perfect picturesqueness, it is the most charming poetry in the world. The prolonged, delicate, exquisite sustentation of the pictorial tone seems to me a marvel of ingenuity and fancy. It appeals to a highly cultivated sense, but what enjoyment is so keen as that of the cultivated sense when its finer nerve is really touched? The *Idyls* all belong to the poetry of association; but before they were written we had yet to learn how finely association could be analysed, and how softly its chords could be played upon. When Enoch Arden came back from his desert island,

> "He like a lover down through all his blood
> Drew in the dewy, meadowy morning breath
> Of England, blown across her ghostly wall."

Tennyson's solid verbal felicities, his unerring sense of the romantic, his acute perception of everything in nature that may contribute to his fund of exquisite imagery, his refinement, his literary tone, his aroma of English lawns and English libraries, the whole happy chance of his selection of the Arthurian legends—all this, and a dozen minor

graces which it would take almost his own "daintiness" to formulate, make him, it seems to me, the most charming of the *entertaining* poets. It is as an entertaining poet I chiefly think of him; his morality, at moments, is certainly importunate enough, but elevated as it is, it never seems to me of so fine a distillation as his imagery. As a didactic creation I do not greatly care for King Arthur; but as a fantastic one he is infinitely remunerative. He is doubtless not, as an intellectual conception, massive enough to be called a great figure; but he is, picturesquely, so admirably self-consistent, that the reader's imagination is quite willing to turn its back, if need be, on his judgment, and give itself up to idle enjoyment.

As regards Tennyson's imagery, anything that one quotes in illustration is, as I have said, certain to be extremely familiar; but even familiarity can hardly dull the beauty of such a touch as that about Merlin's musings:

> "So dark a forethought rolled about his brain,
> As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
> The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
> In silence."

Or of that which puts in vivid form the estrangement of Enid and Geraint:

> "The two remained
> Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute

As creatures voiceless through the fault of birth,
Or two wild men, supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
The one at other, parted by the shield."

Happy, in short, the poet who can offer his heroine for her dress

——"a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where, like a shoaling sea, the lovely blue
Played into green."

I have touched here only upon Tennyson's narrative poems, because they seemed most in order in any discussion of the author's dramatic faculty. They cannot be said to place it in an eminent light, and they remind one more of the courage than of the discretion embodied in *Queen Mary*. Lovely pictures of things standing, with a sort of conscious stillness, for their poetic likeness, measured speeches, full of delicate harmonies and curious cadences—these things they contain in plenty, but little of that liberal handling of cross-speaking passion and humour which, with a strong constructive faculty, we regard as the sign of a genuine dramatist.

The dramatic form seems to me of all literary forms the very noblest. I have so extreme a relish for it that I am half afraid to trust myself to praise it, lest I should seem to be merely rhapsodizing. But to be really noble it must be quite

itself, and between a poor drama and a fine one there is, I think, a wider interval than anywhere else in the scale of success. A sequence of speeches headed by proper names—a string of dialogues broken into acts and scenes—does not constitute a drama; not even when the speeches are very clever and the dialogue bristles with "points."

The fine thing in a real drama, generally speaking, is that, more than any other work of literary art, it needs a masterly structure. It needs to be shaped and fashioned and laid together, and this process makes a demand upon an artist's rarest gifts. He must combine and arrange, interpolate and eliminate, play the joiner with the most attentive skill; and yet at the end effectually bury his tools and his sawdust, and invest his elaborate skeleton with the smoothest and most polished integument. The five-act drama—serious or humourous, poetic or prosaic—is like a box of fixed dimensions and inelastic material, into which a mass of precious things are to be packed away. It is a problem in ingenuity and a problem of the most interesting kind. The precious things in question seem out of all proportion to the compass of the receptacle; but the artist has an assurance that with patience and skill a place may be made for each, and that nothing need be clipped or crumpled, squeezed or damaged. The false

dramatist either knocks out the sides of his box, or plays the deuce with the contents; the real one gets down on his knees, disposes of his goods tentatively, this, that, and the other way, loses his temper but keeps his ideal, and at last rises in triumph, having packed his coffer in the one way that is mathematically right. It closes perfectly, and the lock turns with a click; between one object and another you cannot insert the point of a penknife.

To work successfully beneath a few grave, rigid laws, is always a strong man's highest ideal of success. The reader cannot be sure how deeply conscious Mr. Tennyson has been of the laws of the drama, but it would seem as if he had not very attentively pondered them. In a play, certainly, the subject is of more importance than in any other work of art. Infelicity, triviality, vagueness of subject, may be outweighed in a poem, a novel, or a picture, by charm of manner, by ingenuity of execution; but in a drama the subject is of the essence of the work—it *is* the work. If it is feeble, the work can have no force; if it is shapeless, the work must be amorphous.

Queen Mary, I think, has this fundamental weakness; it would be very hard to say what its subject is. Strictly speaking, the drama has none. To the statement, "It is the reign of the elder daughter of Henry VIII.," it seems to me very nearly

fair to reply that that is not a subject. I do not mean to say that a consummate dramatist could not resolve it into one, but the presumption is altogether against it. It cannot be called an intrigue, nor treated as one; it tends altogether to expansion; whereas a genuine dramatic subject should tend to concentration.

Madame Ristori, that accomplished tragédienne, has for some years been carrying about the world with her a piece of writing, punctured here and there with curtain-falls, which she presents to numerous audiences as a tragedy embodying the history of Queen Elizabeth. The thing is worth mentioning only as an illustration; it is from the hand of a prolific Italian purveyor of such wares, and is as bad as need be. Many of the persons who read these lines will have seen it, and will remember it as a mere bald sequence of anecdotes, roughly cast into dialogue. It is not incorrect to say that, as regards form, Mr. Tennyson's drama is of the same family as the historical tragedies of Signor Giacometti. It is simply a dramatised chronicle, without an internal structure, taking its material in pieces, as history hands them over, and working each one up into an independent scene—usually with rich ability. It has no shape; it is cast into no mould; it has neither beginning, middle, nor end, save the chronological ones.

A work of this sort may have a great many merits

(those of *Queen Mary* are numerous), but it cannot have the merit of being a drama. We have, indeed, only to turn to Shakespeare to see how much of pure dramatic interest may be infused into an imperfect dramatic form. *Henry IV.* and the others of its group, *Richard III., Henry VIII., Antony and Cleopatra, Julius Cæsar,* are all chronicles in dialogue, are all simply Holinshed and Plutarch transferred into immortal verse. They are magnificent because Shakespeare could do nothing weak; but all Shakespearian as they are, they are not models; the models are *Hamlet* and *Othello, Macbeth* and *Lear.* Tennyson is not Shakespeare, but in everything he had done hitherto there had been an essential perfection, and we are sorry that, in the complete maturity of his talent, proposing to write a drama, he should have chosen the easy way rather than the hard.

He chose, however, a period out of which a compact dramatic subject of the richest interest might well have been wrought. For this, of course, considerable invention would have been needed, and Mr. Tennyson had apparently no invention to bring to his task. He has embroidered cunningly the groundwork offered him by Mr. Froude, but he has contributed no new material. The field offers a great stock of dramatic figures, and one's imagination kindles as one thinks of the multifarious combinations into which they might have been cast.

We do not pretend of course to say in detail what Mr. Tennyson might have done; we simply risk the affirmation that he might have wrought a somewhat denser tissue. History certainly would have suffered, but poetry would have gained, and he is writing poetry and not history. As his drama stands, we take it that he does not pretend to have deepened our historic light.

Psychologically, picturesquely, the persons in the foreground of Mary's reign constitute a most impressive and interesting group. The imagination plays over it importunately, and wearies itself with scanning the outlines and unlighted corners. Mary herself unites a dozen strong dramatic elements—in her dark religious passion, her unrequited conjugal passion, her mixture of the Spanish and English natures, her cruelty and her conscience, her high-handed rule and her constant insecurity. With her dark figure lighted luridly by perpetual martyr-fires, and made darker still by the presence of her younger sister, radiant with the promise of England's coming greatness; with Lady Jane Grey groping for the block behind her; her cold fanatic of a husband beside her, as we know him by Velasquez (with not a grain of fanaticism to spare for her); with her subtle ecclesiastical cousin Pole on the other side, with evil counsellors and dogged martyrs and a threatening people all around her, and with a lonely, dreary, disappointed and un-

lamented death before her, she is a subject made to the hand of a poet who should know how to mingle cunningly his darker shades. Tennyson has elaborated her figure in a way that is often masterly; it is a success—the greatest success of the poem. It is compounded in his hands of very subtle elements, and he keeps them from ever becoming gross.

The Mary of his pages is a complex personage, and not what she might so easily become—a mere picturesque stalking-horse of melodrama. The art with which he has still kept her sympathetic and human, at the same time that he has darkened the shadows in her portrait to the deepest tone that he had warrant for, is especially noticeable. It is not in Mr. Tennyson's pages that Mary appears for the first time in the drama; she gives her name to a play of Victor Hugo's dating from the year 1833 —the prime of the author's career. I have just been reading over *Marie Tudor,* and it has suggested a good many reflections. I think it probable that many of the readers of *Queen Mary* would be quite unable to peruse Victor Hugo's consummately unpleasant production to the end; but they would admit, I suppose, that a person who had had the stomach to do so might have something particular to say about it.

If one had an eye for contrasts, the contrast between these two works is extremely curious. I said just now that Tennyson had brought no invention

to his task; but it may be said, on the other side, that Victor Hugo has brought altogether too much. If Tennyson has been unduly afraid of remodelling history, the author of *Marie Tudor* has known no such scruples; he has slashed into the sacred chart with the shears of a *romantique* of 1830. Although Tennyson, in a general way, is an essentially picturesque poet, his picturesqueness is of an infinitely milder type than that of Victor Hugo; the one ends where the other begins. With Victor Hugo the horrible is always the main element of the picturesque, and the beautiful and the tender are rarely introduced save to give it relief. In *Marie Tudor* they cannot be said to be introduced at all; the drama is one masterly compound of abominable horror; horror for horror's sake—for the sake of chiaroscuro, of colour, of the footlights, of the actors; not in the least in any visible interest of human nature, of moral verity, of the discrimination of character.

What Victor Hugo has here made of the rigid, strenuous, pitiable English queen seems to me a good example of how little the handling of sinister passions sometimes costs a genius of his type—how little conviction or deep reflection goes with it. There was a Mary of a far keener tragic interest than the epigrammatic Messalina whom he has portrayed; but her image was established in graver and finer colours, and he passes jauntily beside it,

without suspecting its capacity. Marie Tudor is a lascivious termagant who amuses herself, first, with caressing an Italian adventurer, then with slapping his face, and then with dabbling in his blood; but we do not really see why the author should have given his heroine a name which history held in her more or less sacred keeping; one's interest in the drama would have been more comfortable if the persons, in their impossible travesty, did not present themselves as old friends. It is true that the "Baron of Dinasmonddy" can hardly be called an old friend; but he is at least as familiar as the Earl of Clanbrassil, the Baron of Darmouth in Devonshire, and Lord South-Repps.

Marie Tudor, then has little to do with nature and nothing with either history or morality; and yet, without a paradox, it has some very strong qualities. It is at any rate a genuine drama, and it succeeds thoroughly well in what it attempts. It is moulded and proportioned to a definite scenic end, and never falters in its course. To read it just after you have read *Queen Mary* brings out its merits, as well as its defects; and if the contrast makes you inhale with a double satisfaction the clearer moral atmosphere of the English work, it leads you also to reflect with some gratitude that dramatic tradition, in our modern era, has not remained solely in English hands.

Mr. Tennyson has very frankly fashioned his

play upon the model of the Shakespearian "histories." He has given us the same voluminous list of characters; he has made the division into acts merely arbitrary; he has introduced low-life interlocutors, talking in archaic prose; and whenever the fancy has taken him, he has culled his idioms and epithets from the Shakespearian vocabulary. As regards this last point, he has shown all the tact and skill that were to be expected from so approved a master of language. The prose scenes are all of a quasi-humourous description, and they emulate the queer jocosities of Shakespeare more successfully than seemed probable; though it was not to be forgotten that the author of the "Palace of Art" was also the author of the "Northern Farmer." These few lines might have been taken straight from *Henry IV.* or *Henry VIII.:*

"No; we know that you be come to kill the Queen, and we'll pray for you all on our bended knees. But o' God's mercy, don't you kill the Queen here, Sir Thomas; look ye, here's little Dickon, and little Robin, and little Jenny — though she's but a side cousin — and all, on our knees, we pray you to kill the Queen farther off, Sir Thomas."

The poet, however, is modern when he chooses to be:

> "Action and reaction,
> The miserable see-saw of our child-world,
> Make us despise it at odd hours, my Lord."

That reminds one less of the Elizabethan than of the Victorian era. Mr. Tennyson has desired to give a general picture of the time, to reflect all its leading elements and commemorate its salient episodes. From this point of view England herself—England struggling and bleeding in the clutches of the Romish wolf, as he would say—is the heroine of the drama. This heroine is very nobly and vividly imaged, and we feel the poet to be full of a retroactive as well as a present patriotism. It is a plain Protestant attitude that he takes; there is no attempt at analysis of the Catholic sense of the situation; it is quite the old story that we learned in our school-histories as children. We do not mean that this is not the veracious way of presenting it; but we notice the absence of that tendency to place it in different lights, accumulate *pros* and *cons,* and plead opposed causes in the interest of ideal truth, which would have been so obvious if Mr. Browning had handled the theme. And yet Mr. Tennyson has been large and liberal, and some of the finest passages in the poem are uttered by independent Catholics. The author has wished to give a hint of everything, and he has admirably divined the anguish of mind of many men who were unprepared to go with the new way of thinking, and yet were scandalised at the license of the old—who were willing to be Catholics, and yet not willing to be delivered over to Spain.

Where so many episodes are sketched, few of course can be fully developed; but there is a vivid manliness of the classic English type in such portraits as Lord William Howard and Sir Ralph Bagenhall—poor Sir Ralph, who declares that

> "Far liefer had I in my country hall
> Been reading some old book, with mine old hound
> Couch'd at my hearth, and mine old flask of wine
> Beside me,"

than stand as he does in the thick of the trouble of the time; and who finally is brought to his account for not having knelt with the commons to the legate of Charles V. We have a glimpse of Sir Thomas Wyatt's insurrection, and a portrait of that robust rebel, who was at the same time an editor of paternal sonnets—sonnets of a father who loved

> "To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
> The lark above, the nightingale below,
> And answer them in song."

We have a very touching report of Lady Jane Grey's execution, and we assist almost directly at the sad perplexities of poor Cranmer's eclipse. We appreciate the contrast between the fine nerves and many-sided conscience of that wavering martyr, and the more comfortable religious temperament of Bonner and Gardiner—Bonner, apt "to gorge a

heretic whole, roasted, or raw;" and Gardiner, who can say,

> "I've gulpt it down; I'm wholly for the Pope,
> Utterly and altogether for the Pope,
> The Eternal Peter of the changeless chair,
> Crowned slave of slaves and mitred king of kings.
> God upon earth! What more? What would you have?"

Elizabeth makes several appearances, and though they are brief, the poet has evidently had a definite figure in his mind's eye. On a second reading it betrays a number of fine intentions. The circumspection of the young princess, her high mettle, her coquetry, her frankness, her coarseness, are all rapidly glanced at. Her exclamation—

> "I would I were a milkmaid,
> To sing, love, marry, churn, brew, bake, and die,
> And have my simple headstone by the church,
> And all things lived and ended honestly"—

marks one limit of the sketch; and the other is indicated by her reply to Cecil at the end of the drama, on his declaring, in allusion to Mary, that "never English monarch dying left England so little":

> "But with Cecil's aid
> And others', if our person be secured
> From traitor stabs, we will make England great!"

The middle term is perhaps marked by her reception of the functionary who comes to inform her that her sister bids her know that the King of Spain desires her to marry Prince Philibert of Savoy:

> "I thank you heartily, sir,
> But I am royal, tho' your prisoner,
> And God hath blessed or cursed me with a nose —
> Your boots are from the horses."

The drama is deficient in male characters of salient interest. Philip is vague and blank, as he is evidently meant to be, and Cardinal Pole is a portrait of a character constitutionally inapt for breadth of action. The portrait is a skilful one, however, and expresses forcibly the pangs of a sensitive nature entangled in trenchant machinery. There is a fine scene near the close of the drama in which Pole and the Queen—cousins, old friends, and for a moment betrothed (Victor Hugo characteristically assumes Mary to have been her cousin's mistress)—confide to each other their weariness and disappointment. Mary endeavours to console the Cardinal, but he has only grim answers for her:

> "Our altar is a mound of dead men's clay,
> Dug from the grave that yawns for us beyond;
> And there is one Death stands beside the Groom,
> And there is one Death stands beside the Bride."

Queen Mary, I believe, is to be put upon the stage next winter in London. I do not pretend to forecast its success in representation; but it is not indiscrete to say that it will suffer from the absence of a man's part capable of being made striking. The very clever Mr. Henry Irving has, we are told, offered his services, presumably to play either Philip or Pole. If he imparts any great relief to either figure, it will be a signal proof of talent. The actress, however, to whom the part of the Queen is allotted will have every reason to be grateful. The character is full of colour and made to utter a number of really dramatic speeches. When Renard assures her that Philip is only waiting for leave of the Parliament to land on English shores she has an admirable outbreak:

"God change the pebble which his kingly foot
First presses into some more costly stone
Than ever blinded eye. I'll have one mark it
And bring it me. I'll have it burnished firelike;
I'll set it round with gold, with pearl, with diamond.
Let the great angel of the Church come with him,
Stand on the deck and spread his wings for sail!"

Mary is not only vividly conceived from within, but her physiognomy, as seen from without, is indicated with much pictorial force:

"Did you mark our Queen?
The colour freely played into her face,

And the half sight which makes her look so stern
Seemed, through that dim, dilated world of hers,
To read our faces."

In the desolation of her last days, when she bids her attendants go to her sister and

"Tell her to come and close my dying eyes
And wear my crown and dance upon my grave,"

Mary, to attest her misery, seats herself on the ground, like Constance in "King John"; and the comment of one of her women hereupon is strikingly picturesque:

"Good Lord! how grim and ghastly looks her Grace,
With both her knees drawn upward to her chin.
There was an old-world tomb beside my father's,
And this was opened, and the dead were found
Sitting, and in this fashion; she looks a corpse."

The great merit of Mr. Tennyson's drama, however, is not in the quotableness of certain passages, but in the thoroughly elevated spirit of the whole. He desired to make us feel of what sound manly stuff the Englishmen of that Tudor reign of terror needed to be, and his verse is pervaded by the echo of their deep-toned refusal to abdicate their manhood. The temper of the poem, on this line, is so noble that the critic who has indulged in a few strictures as to matters of form feels as if he had been frivolous and niggardly. I nevertheless ven-

ture to add in conclusion that *Queen Mary* seems to me a work of rare ability rather than great inspiration; a powerful *tour de force* rather than a labour of love. But though it is not the best of a great poet's achievement, only a great poet could have written it.

II. HAROLD

The author of *Queen Mary* seems disposed to show us that that work was not an accident, but rather, as it may be said, an incident of his literary career. The incident has just been repeated, though *Harold* has come into the world more quietly than its predecessor.

It is singular how soon the public gets used to unfamiliar notions. By the time the reader has finished *Harold* he has almost contracted the habit of thinking of Mr. Tennyson as a writer chiefly known to fame by "dramas" without plots and dialogues without point. This impression it behooves him, of course, to shake off if he wishes to judge the book properly. He must compare the author of "Maud" and the earlier *Idyls* with the great poets, and not with the small. *Harold* would be a respectable production for a writer who had spent his career in producing the same sort of thing, but it is a somewhat graceless anomaly in the record of a poet whose verse has, in a large degree, become part of the civilisation of his day.

Queen Mary was not, on the whole, pronounced a success, and *Harold,* roughly speaking, is to *Queen Mary* what that work is to the author's earlier masterpieces. *Harold* is not in the least bad: it contains nothing ridiculous, unreasonable, or disagreeable; it is only decidedly weak, decidedly colourless, and tame. The author's inspiration is like a fire which is quietly and contentedly burning low. The analogy is perfectly complete. The hearth is clean swept and the chimney-side is garnished with its habitual furniture; but the room is getting colder and colder, and the occasional little flickers emitted by the mild embers are not sufficient to combat the testimony of the poetical thermometer. There is nothing necessarily harsh in this judgment. Few fires are always at a blaze, and the imagination, which is the most delicate machine in the world, cannot be expected to serve longer than a good gold repeater. We must take what it gives us, in every case, and be thankful. Mr. Tennyson is perfectly welcome to amuse himself with listening to the fainter tick of his honoured time-piece; it is going still, unquestionably; it has not stopped. Only we may without rudeness abstain from regulating our engagements by the indications of the instrument.

Harold seems at first to have little, in form, that is characteristic of the author—little of the thoroughly familiar Tennysonian quality. Never-

theless, there is every now and then a line which arrests the ear by the rhythm and cadence which have always formed the chief mystery in the art of imitating the Laureate.

Meeting in the early pages such a line as

"What, with this flaming horror overhead?"

we should suspect we were reading Tennyson if we did not know it; and our suspicion would be amply confirmed by half a dozen other lines:

"Taken the rifted pillars of the wood."

"My greyhounds fleeting like a beam of light."

"Suffer a stormless shipwreck in the pools."

"That scared the dying conscience of the king."

Harold is interesting as illustrating, in addition to *Queen Mary*, Mr. Tennyson's idea of what makes a drama. A succession of short scenes, detached from the biography of a historical character, is, apparently, to his sense sufficient; the constructive side of the work is thereby reduced to a primitive simplicity. It is even more difficult to imagine acting *Harold* than it was to imagine acting *Queen Mary;* and it is probable that in this case the experiment will not be tried. And yet the story, or rather the historical episode, upon which Mr. Ten-

nyson has here laid his hand is eminently interesting.

Harold, the last of the "English," as people of a certain way of feeling are fond of calling him—the son of Godwin, masterful minister of Edward the Confessor, the wearer for a short and hurried hour of the English crown, and the opponent and victim of William of Normandy on the field of Hastings —is a figure which combines many of the elements of romance and of heroism. The author has very characteristically tried to accentuate the moral character of his hero by making him a sort of distant relation of the family of Galahad and Arthur and the other moralising gallants to whom his pages have introduced us. Mr. Tennyson's Harold is a warrior who talks about his "better self," and who alludes to

> "Waltham, my foundation
> For men who serve their neighbour, not themselves,"

—a touch which transports us instantly into the atmosphere of the Arthurian Idyls. But Harold's history may be very easily and properly associated with a moral problem, inasmuch as it was his unhappy fortune to have to solve, practically, a knotty point which might have been more comfortably left to the casuists. Shipwrecked during Edward's life upon the coast of Normandy, he is betrayed into the hands of Duke William, who already retains as hos-

tage one of his brothers (the sons of Godwin were very numerous, and they all figure briefly, but with a certain attempt at individual characterisation, in the drama). To purchase his release and that of his brother, who passionately entreats him, he consents to swear by certain unseen symbols, which prove afterwards to be the bones of certain august Norman saints, that if William will suffer him to return to England, he will, on the Confessor's death, abstain from urging the claim of the latter's presumptive heir and do his utmost to help the Norman duke himself to the crown.

This scene is presented in the volume before us. Harold departs and regains England, and there, on the king's death, overborne by circumstances, but with much tribulation of mind, violates his oath, and himself takes possession of the throne. The interest of the drama is in a great measure the picture of his temptation and remorse, his sense of his treachery and of the inevitableness of his chastisement. With this other matters are mingled: Harold's conflict with his disloyal brother Tostig, Earl of Northumberland, who brings in the King of Norway to claim the crown, and who, with his Norwegian backers, is defeated by Harold in battle just before William comes down upon him. Then there is his love-affair with Edith, ward of the Confessor, whom the latter, piously refusing to hear of his violation of his oath, condemns him to put away, as

penance for the very thought. There is also his marriage with Aldwyth, a designing person, widow of a Welsh king whom Harold has defeated, and who, having herself through her parentage, strong English interests, inveigles Harold into a union which may consolidate their forces.

Altogether, Harold is, for a hero, rather inclined to falter and succumb. It is to his conscience, however, that he finally succumbs; he loses heart and goes to meet William at Hastings with a depressing presentiment of defeat. Mr. Tennyson, however, as we gather from a prefatory sonnet, which is perhaps finer than anything in the drama itself, holds that much can be said for the "Norman-slandered hero," and declares that he has nothing to envy William if

> "Each stands full face with all he did below."

Edith, Harold's repudiated lady-love, is, we suppose, the heroine of the story, inasmuch as she has the privilege of expiring upon the corpse of the hero. Harold's defeat is portrayed through a conversation between Edith and Stigand, the English and anti-papal Archbishop of Canterbury, who watches the fight at Senlac from a tent near the field, while the monks of Waltham, outside, intone a Latin invocation to the God of Battles to sweep away the Normans.

The drama closes with a scene on the field, aft

the fight, in which Edith and Aldwyth wander about, trying to identify Harold among the slain. On discovering him they indulge in a few natural recriminations, then Edith loses her head and expires by his side. William comes in, rubbing his hands over his work, and intimates to Aldwyth that she may now make herself agreeable to *him*. She replies, hypocritically, "My punishment is more than I can bear"; and with this, the most dramatic speech, perhaps in the volume, the play terminates. Edith, we should say, is a heroine of the didactic order. She has a bad conscience about Harold's conduct, and about her having continued on affectionate terms with him after his diplomatic marriage with Aldwyth. When she prays for Harold's success she adds that she hopes heaven will not refuse to listen to her because she loves "the husband of another"; and after he is defeated she reproaches herself with having injured his prospects—

> "For there was more than sister in my kiss."

Though there are many persons in the poem it cannot be said that any of them attains a very vivid individuality. Indeed, their great number, the drama being of moderate length, hinders the unfolding of any one of them.

Mr. Tennyson, moreover, has not the dramatic touch; he rarely finds the phrase or the movement

that illuminates a character, rarely makes the dialogue strike sparks. This is generally mild and colourless, and the passages that arrest us, relatively, owe their relief to juxtaposition rather than to any especial possession of the old Tennysonian energy. Now and then we come upon a few lines together in which we seem to catch an echo of the author's earlier magic, or sometimes simply of his earlier manner. When we do, we make the most of them and are grateful. Such, for instance, is the phrase of one of the characters describing his rescue from shipwreck. He dug his hands, he says, into

> "My old fast friend the shore, and clinging thus
> Felt the remorseless outdraught of the deep
> Haul like a great strong fellow at my legs."

Such are the words in which Wulfnoth, Harold's young brother, detained in Normandy, laments his situation:

> "Yea, and I
> Shall see the dewy kiss of dawn no more
> Make blush the maiden-white of our tall cliffs,
> Nor mark the sea-bird rouse himself and hover
> Above the windy ripple, and fill the sky
> With free sea-laughter."

In two or three places the author makes, in a few words, a picture, an image, of considerable felicity.

Harold wishes that he were like Edward the Confessor,

> "As holy and as passionless as he!
> That I might rest as calmly! Look at him —
> The rosy face, and long, down-silvering beard,
> The brows unwrinkled as a summer mere."

We may add that in the few speeches allotted to this monarch of virtuous complexion this portrait is agreeably sustained. "Holy, is he?" says the Archbishop, Stigand, of him to Harold—

> "A conscience for his own soul, not his realm;
> A twilight conscience lighted thro' a chink;
> Thine by the sun."

And the same character hits upon a really vigorous image in describing, as he watches them, Harold's exploits on the battle-fields:

> "Yea, yea, for how their lances snap and shiver,
> Against the shifting blaze of Harold's axe!
> War-woodman of old Woden, how he fells
> The mortal copse of faces!"

We feel, after all, in Mr. Tennyson, even in the decidedly minor key in which this volume is pitched, that he has once known how to turn our English poetic phrase as skilfully as any one, and that he has not altogether forgotten the art.

CONTEMPORARY NOTES ON WHISTLER VS. RUSKIN

I. Originally published as an unsigned note in *The Nation,* December 19, 1878. The jury allowed Whistler one farthing damages.

II. Originally published as an unsigned note in *The Nation,* February 13, 1879.

The pamphlet here referred to was entitled *Whistler vs. Ruskin: Art and Art-Critics.* London: Chatto & Windus. 1878. This essay was afterwards reprinted in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies,* London, 1890.

CONTEMPORARY NOTES ON WHISTLER vs. RUSKIN

I. THE SUIT FOR LIBEL

THE London public is never left for many days without a *cause célèbre* of some kind. The latest novelty in this line has been the suit for damages brought against Mr. Ruskin by Mr. James Whistler, the American painter, and decided last week. Mr. Whistler is very well known in the London world, and his conspicuity, combined with the renown of the defendant and the nature of the case, made the affair the talk of the moment. All the newspapers have had leading articles upon it, and people have differed for a few hours more positively than it had come to be supposed that they could differ about anything save the character of the statesmanship of Lord Beaconsfield. The injury suffered by Mr. Whistler resides in a paragraph published more than a year ago in that strange monthly manifesto called *Fors Clavigera,* which Mr. Ruskin had for a long time addressed to a partly edified, partly irritated, and greatly amused public. Mr. Ruskin spoke at some length of the pictures at the Grosvenor Gallery, and, fall-

ing foul of Mr. Whistler, he alluded to him in these terms:

"For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen and heard much of cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask 200 guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

Mr. Whistler alleged that these words were libellous, and that, coming from a critic of Mr. Ruskin's eminence, they had done him, professionally, serious injury; and he asked for £1,000 damage. The case had a two days' hearing, and it was a singular and most regrettable exhibition. If it had taken place in some Western American town, it would have been called provincial and barbarous; it would have been cited as an incident of a low civilisation. Beneath the stately towers of Westminster it hardly wore a higher aspect.

A British jury of ordinary tax-payers was appealed to decide whether Mr. Whistler's pictures belonged to a high order of art, and what degree of "finish" was required to render a picture satisfactory. The painter's singular canvases were handed about in court, and the counsel for the defence, holding one of them up, called upon the jury

to pronounce whether it was an "accurate representation" of Battersea Bridge. Witnesses were summoned on either side to testify to the value of Mr. Whistler's productions, and Mr. Ruskin had the honour of having his estimate of them substantiated by Mr. Frith. The weightiest testimony, the most intelligently, and apparently the most reluctantly delivered, was that of Mr. Burne Jones, who appeared to appreciate the ridiculous character of the process to which he had been summoned (by the defence) to contribute, and who spoke of Mr. Whistler's performance as only in a partial sense of the word pictures—as being beautiful in colour, and indicating an extraordinary power of representing the atmosphere, but as being also hardly more than beginnings, and fatally deficient in finish. For the rest the crudity and levity of the whole affair were decidedly painful, and few things, I think, have lately done more to vulgarise the public sense of the character of artistic production.

The jury gave Mr. Whistler nominal damages. The opinion of the newspapers seems to be that he has got at least all he deserved—that anything more would have been a blow at the liberty of criticism. I confess to thinking it hard to decide what Mr. Whistler ought properly to have done, while—putting aside the degree of one's appreciation of his works—I quite understand his resent-

ment. Mr. Ruskin's language quite transgresses the decencies of criticism, and he has been laying about him for some years past with such promiscuous violence that it gratifies one's sense of justice to see him brought up as a disorderly character. On the other hand, he is a chartered libertine—he has possessed himself by prescription of the function of a general scold. His literary bad manners are recognised, and many of his contemporaries have suffered from them without complaining. It would very possibly, therefore, have been much wiser on Mr. Whistler's part to feign indifference. Unfortunately, Mr. Whistler's productions are so very eccentric and imperfect (I speak here of his paintings only; his etchings are quite another affair, and altogether admirable) that his critic's denunciation could by no means fall to the ground of itself. I wonder that before a British jury they had any chance whatever; they must have been a terrible puzzle.

The verdict, of course, satisfies neither party; Mr. Ruskin is formally condemned, but the plaintiff is not compensated. Mr. Ruskin too, doubtless, is not gratified at finding that the fullest weight of his disapproval is thought to be represented by the sum of one farthing.

II. MR. WHISTLER'S REJOINDER

I may mention as a sequel to the brief account of the suit Whistler v. Ruskin, which I sent you a short time since, that the plaintiff has lately published a little pamphlet in which he delivers himself on the subject of art-criticism.

This little pamphlet, issued by Chatto & Windus, is an affair of seventeen very prettily-printed small pages; it is now in its sixth edition, it sells for a shilling, and is to be seen in most of the shop-windows. It is very characteristic of the painter, and highly entertaining; but I am not sure that it will have rendered appreciable service to the cause, which he has at heart. The cause that Mr. Whistler has at heart is the absolute suppression and extinction of the art-critic and his function. According to Mr. Whistler the art-critic is an impertinence, a nuisance, a monstrosity—and usually, into the bargain, an arrant fool.

Mr. Whistler writes in an off-hand, colloquial style, much besprinkled with French—a style which might be called familiar if one often encountered anything like it. He writes by no means as well as he paints; but his little diatribe against the critics is suggestive, apart from the force of anything that he specifically urges. The painter's irritated feeling is interesting, for it suggests the state of mind of many of his brothers of the brush in the

presence of the bungling and incompetent disquisitions of certain members of the fraternity who sit in judgment upon their works.

"Let work be received in silence," says Mr. Whistler, "as it was in the days to which the penman still points as an era when art was at its apogee." He is very scornful of the "penman," and it is on the general ground of his being a penman that he deprecates the existence of his late adversary, Mr. Ruskin. He does not attempt to make out a case in detail against the great commentator of pictures; it is enough for Mr. Whistler that he is a "littérateur," and that a littérateur should concern himself with his own business. The author also falls foul of Mr. Tom Taylor, who does the reports of the exhibitions in the *Times*, and who had the misfortune, fifteen years ago, to express himself rather unintelligently about Velasquez.

"The Observatory at Greenwich under the direction of an apothecary," says Mr. Whistler, "the College of Physicians with Tennyson as president, and we know what madness is about! But a school of art with an accomplished littérateur at its head disturbs no one, and is actually what the world receives as rational, while Ruskin writes for pupils and Colvin holds forth at Cambridge! Still, quite alone stands Ruskin, whose writing is art and whose

art is unworthy his writing. To him and his example do we owe the outrage of proffered assistance from the unscientific—the meddling of the immodest—the intrusion of the garrulous. Art, that for ages has hewn its own history in marble and written its own comments on canvas, shall it suddenly stand still and stammer and wait for wisdom from the passer-by?—for guidance from the hand that holds neither brush nor chisel? Out upon the shallow conceit! What greater sarcasm can Mr. Ruskin pass upon himself than that he preaches to young men what he cannot perform? Why, unsatisfied with his conscious power, should he choose to become the type of incompetency by talking for forty years of what he has never done?''

Mr. Whistler winds up by pronouncing Mr. Ruskin, of whose writings he has perused, I suspect, an infinitesimally small number of pages, ''the Peter Parley of Painting.'' This is very far, as I say, from exhausting the question; but it is easy to understand the state of mind of a London artist (to go no further) who skims through the critiques in the local journals. There is no scurrility in saying that these are for the most part almost incredibly weak and unskilled; to turn from one of them to a critical *feuilleton* in one of the Parisian journals is like passing from a primitive to a very high civilisation. Even, however, if the reviews of pictures

were very much better, the protest of the producer as against the critic would still have a considerable validity.

Few people will deny that the development of criticism in our day has become inordinate, disproportionate, and that much of what is written under that exalted name is very idle and superficial. Mr. Whistler's complaint belongs to the general question, and I am afraid it will never obtain a serious hearing, on special and exceptional grounds. The whole artistic fraternity is in the same boat—the painters, the architects, the poets, the novelists, the dramatists, the actors, the musicians, the singers. They have a standing, and in many ways a very just, quarrel with criticism; but perhaps many of them would admit that, on the whole, so long as they appeal to a public laden with many cares and a great variety of interests, it gratifies as much as it displeases them. Art is one of the necessities of life; but even the critics themselves would probably not assert that criticism is anything more than an agreeable luxury—something like printed talk. If it be said that they claim too much in calling it "agreeable" to the criticised, it may be added in their behalf that they probably mean agreeable in the long run.

A NOTE ON JOHN BURROUGHS

An unsigned review of *Winter Sunshine.* By John Burroughs. New York: Hurd & Houghton. 1876. Originally published in *The Nation,* January 27, 1876.

A NOTE ON JOHN BURROUGHS

THIS is a very charming little book. We had noticed, on their appearance in various periodicals, some of the articles of which it is composed, and we find that, read continuously, they have given us even more pleasure. We have, indeed, enjoyed them more perhaps than we can show sufficient cause for. They are slender and light, but they have a real savour of their own.

Mr. Burroughs is known as an out-of-door observer—a devotee of birds and trees and fields and aspects of weather and humble wayside incidents. The minuteness of his observation, the keenness of his perception of all these things, give him a real originality which is confirmed by a style sometimes indeed idiomatic and unfinished to a fault, but capable of remarkable felicity and vividness. Mr. Burroughs is also, fortunately for his literary prosperity in these days, a decided "humourist"; he is essentially and genially an American, without at all posing as one, and his sketches have a delightful oddity, vivacity, and freshness.

The first half of his volume, and the least sub-

stantial, treats of certain rambles taken in the winter and spring in the country around Washington; the author is an apostle of pedestrianism, and these pages form a prolonged rhapsody upon the pleasures within the reach of any one who will take the trouble to stretch his legs. They are full of charming touches, and indicate a real genius for the observation of natural things. Mr. Burroughs is a sort of reduced, but also more humourous, more available, and more sociable Thoreau. He is especially intimate with the birds, and he gives his reader an acute sense of how sociable an affair, during six months of the year, this feathery lore may make a lonely walk. He is also intimate with the question of apples, and he treats of it in a succulent disquisition which imparts to the somewhat trivial theme a kind of lyrical dignity. He remarks, justly, that women are poor apple-eaters.

But the best pages in his book are those which commemorate a short visit to England and the rapture of his first impressions. This little sketch, in spite of its extreme slightness, really deserves to become classical. We have read far solider treatises which contained less of the essence of the matter; or at least, if it is not upon the subject itself that Mr. Burroughs throws particularly powerful light, it is the essence of the ideal traveller's spirit that he gives us, the freshness and intensity of impression, the genial bewilderment, the universal

appreciativeness. All this is delightfully *naïf*, frank, and natural.

"All this had been told, and it pleased me so in the seeing that I must tell it again," the author says; and this is the constant spirit of his talk. He appears to have been "pleased" as no man was ever pleased before; so much so that his reflections upon his own country sometimes become unduly invidious. But if to be appreciative is the traveller's prime duty, Mr. Burroughs is a prince of travellers.

"Then to remember that it was a new sky and a new earth I was beholding, that it was England, the old mother at last, no longer a faith or a fable but an actual fact, there before my eyes and under my feet—why should I not exult? Go to! I will be indulged. These trees, those fields, that bird darting along the hedge-rows, those men and boys picking blackberries in October, those English flowers by the roadside (stop the carriage while I leap out and pluck them), the homely domestic look of things, those houses, those queer vehicles, those thick-coated horses, those big-footed, coarsely-clad, clear-skinned men and women; this massive, homely, compact architecture—let me have a good look, for this is my first hour in England, and I am drunk with the joy of seeing! This house-fly let me inspect it, and that swallow skimming along so familiarly."

One envies Mr. Burroughs his acute relish of the foreign spectacle even more than one enjoys his expression of it. He is not afraid to start and stare; his state of mind is exactly opposed to the high dignity of the *nil admirari*. When he goes into St. Paul's, "my companions rushed about," he says, "as if each one had a search-warrant in his pocket; but I was content to uncover my head and drop into a seat, and busy my mind with some simple object near at hand, while the sublimity that soared about me stole into my soul." He meets a little girl carrying a pail in a meadow near Stratford, stops her and talks with her, and finds an ineffable delight in "the sweet and novel twang of her words. Her family had emigrated to America, failed to prosper, and come back; but I hardly recognise even the name of my own country in her innocent prattle; it seemed like a land of fable—all had a remote mythological air, and I pressed my enquiries as if I was hearing of this strange land for the first time."

Mr. Burroughs is unfailingly complimentary; he sees sermons in stones and good in everything; the somewhat dusky British world was never steeped in so intense a glow of rose-colour. Sometimes his optimism rather interferes with his accuracy—as when he detects "forests and lakes" in Hyde Park, and affirms that the English rural landscape does not, in comparison with the American, appear

highly populated. This latter statement is apparently made apropos of that long stretch of suburban scenery, pure and simple, which extends from Liverpool to London. It does not strike us as felicitous, either, to say that women are more kindly treated in England than in the United States, and especially that they are less "leered at." "Leering" at women is happily less common all the world over than it is sometimes made to appear for picturesque purposes in the magazines; but we should say that if there is a country where the art has not reached a high stage of development, it is our own.

It must be added that although Mr. Burroughs is shrewd as well as *naïf*, the latter quality sometimes distances the former. He runs over for a week to France. "At Dieppe I first saw the wooden shoe, and heard its dry, senseless clatter upon the pavement. How suggestive of the cramped and inflexible conditions with which human nature has borne so long in these lands!" But in Paris also he is appreciative—singularly so for so complete an outsider as he confesses himself to be—and throughout he is very well worth reading. We heartily commend his little volume for its honesty, its individuality, and, in places, its really blooming freshness.

MR. KIPLING'S EARLY STORIES

Originally published as an *Introduction* to the Continental edition of *Soldiers Three*. By Rudyard Kipling; volume 59 of the *English Library*, Leipzig, Heinemann and Balestier Limited, London. 1891.

MR. KIPLING'S EARLY STORIES

IT would be difficult to answer the general question whether the books of the world grow, as they multiply, as much better as one might suppose they ought, with such a lesson of wasteful experiment spread perpetually behind them. There is no doubt, however, that in one direction we profit largely by this education: whether or not we have become wiser to fashion, we have certainly become keener to enjoy. We have acquired the sense of a particular quality which is precious beyond all others—so precious as to make us wonder where, at such a rate, our posterity will look for it, and how they will pay for it. After tasting many essences we find freshness the sweetest of all. We yearn for it, we watch for it and lie in wait for it, and when we catch it on the wing (it flits by so fast) we celebrate our capture with extravagance. We feel that after so much has come and gone it is more and more of a feat and a *tour de force* to be fresh. The tormenting part of the phenomenon is that, in any particular key, it can happen but once—by a sad failure of the law that inculcates the repetition of goodness. It is terribly a matter of accident; emu-

lation and imitation have a fatal effect upon it. It is easy to see, therefore, what importance the epicure may attach to the brief moment of its bloom. While that lasts we all are epicures.

This helps to explain, I think, the unmistakeable intensity of the general relish for Mr. Rudyard Kipling. His bloom lasts, from month to month, almost surprisingly—by which I mean that he has not worn out even by active exercise the particular property that made us all, more than a year ago, so precipitately drop everything else to attend to him. He has many others which he will doubtless always keep; but a part of the potency attaching to his freshness, what makes it as exciting as a drawing of lots, is our instinctive conviction that he cannot, in the nature of things, keep that; so that our enjoyment of him, so long as the miracle is still wrought, has both the charm of confidence and the charm of suspense. And then there is the further charm, with Mr. Kipling, that this same freshness is such a very strange affair of its kind—so mixed and various and cynical, and, in certain lights, so contradictory of itself. The extreme recentness of his inspiration is as enviable as the tale is startling that his productions tell of his being at home, domesticated and initiated, in this wicked and weary world. At times he strikes us as shockingly precocious, at others as serenely wise. On the whole, he presents himself as a strangely clever youth who

has stolen the formidable mask of maturity and rushes about, making people jump with the deep sounds, and sportive exaggerations of tone, that issue from its painted lips. He has this mark of a real vocation, that different spectators may like him—must like him, I should almost say—for different things; and this refinement of attraction, that to those who reflect even upon their pleasures he has as much to say as to those who never reflect upon anything. Indeed there is a certain amount of room for surprise in the fact that, being so much the sort of figure that the hardened critic likes to meet, he should also be the sort of figure that inspires the multitude with confidence—for a complicated air is, in general, the last thing that does this.

By the critic who likes to meet such a bristling adventurer as Mr. Kipling I mean, of course, the critic for whom the happy accident of character, whatever form it may take, is more of a bribe to interest than the promise of some character cherished in theory—the appearance of justifying some foregone conclusion as to what a writer or a book "ought," in the Ruskinian sense, to be; the critic, in a word, who has, *à priori,* no rule for a literary production but that it shall have genuine life. Such a critic (he gets much more out of his opportunities, I think, than the other sort) likes a writer exactly in proportion as he is a challenge, an appeal

to interpretation, intelligence, ingenuity, to what is elastic in the critical mind—in proportion indeed as he may be a negation of things familiar and taken for granted. He feels in this case how much more play and sensation there is for himself.

Mr. Kipling, then, has the character that furnishes plenty of play and of vicarious experience—that makes any perceptive reader foresee a rare luxury. He has the great merit of being a compact and convenient illustration of the surest source of interest in any painter of life—that of having an identity as marked as a window-frame. He is one of the illustrations, taken near at hand, that help to clear up the vexed question in the novel or the tale, of kinds, camps, schools, distinctions, the right way and the wrong way; so very positively does he contribute to the showing that there are just as many kinds, as many ways, as many forms and degrees of the "right," as there are personal points in view. It is the blessing of the art he practises that it is made up of experience conditioned, infinitely, in this personal way—the sum of the feeling of life as reproduced by innumerable natures; natures that feel through all their differences, testify through their diversities. These differences, which make the identity, are of the individual; they form the channel by which life flows through him, and how much he is able to give us of life—in other

words, how much he appeals to us—depends on whether they form it solidly.

This hardness of the conduit, cemented with a rare assurance, is perhaps the most striking idiosyncrasy of Mr. Kipling; and what makes it more remarkable is that incident of his extreme youth which, if we talk about him at all, we cannot affect to ignore. I cannot pretend to give a biography or a chronology of the author of "Soldiers Three," but I cannot overlook the general, the importunate fact that, confidently as he has caught the trick and habit of this sophisticated world, he has not been long of it. His extreme youth is indeed what I may call his window-bar—the support on which he somewhat rowdily leans while he looks down at the human scene with his pipe in his teeth; just as his other conditions (to mention only some of them), are his prodigious facility, which is only less remarkable than his stiff selection; his unabashed temperament, his flexible talent, his smoking-room manner, his familiar friendship with India—established so rapidly, and so completely under his control; his delight in battle, his "cheek" about women—and indeed about men and about everything; his determination not to be duped, his "imperial" fibre, his love of the inside view, the private soldier and the primitive man. I must add further to this list of attractions the remarkable way in which he

makes us aware that he has been put up to the whole thing directly by life (miraculously, in his teens), and not by the communications of others. These elements, and many more, constitute a singularly robust little literary character (our use of the diminutive is altogether a note of endearment and enjoyment) which, if it has the rattle of high spirits and is in no degree apologetic or shrinking, yet offers a very liberal pledge in the way of good faith and immediate performance. Mr. Kipling's performance comes off before the more circumspect have time to decide whether they like him or not, and if you have seen it once you will be sure to return to the show. He makes us prick up our ears to the good news that in the smoking-room too there may be artists; and indeed to an intimation still more refined—that the latest development of the modern also may be, most successfully, for the canny artist to put his victim off his guard by imitating the amateur (superficially, of course) to the life.

These, then, are some of the reasons why Mr. Kipling may be dear to the analyst as well as, M. Renan says, to the simple. The simple may like him because he is wonderful about India, and India has not been "done"; while there is plenty left for the morbid reader in the surprises of his skill and the *fioriture* of his form, which are so oddly independent of any distinctively literary note in him,

any bookish association. It is as one of the morbid that the writer of these remarks (which doubtless only too shamefully betray his character) exposes himself as most consentingly under the spell. The freshness arising from a subject that—by a good fortune I do not mean to underestimate—has never been "done," is after all less of an affair to build upon than the freshness residing in the temper of the artist. Happy indeed is Mr. Kipling, who can command so much of both kinds. It is still as one of the morbid, no doubt—that is, as one of those who are capable of sitting up all night for a new impression of talent, of scouring the trodden field for one little spot of green—that I find our young author quite most curious in his air, and not only in his air, but in his evidently very real sense, of knowing his way about life. Curious in the highest degree and well worth attention is such an idiosyncrasy as this in a young Anglo-Saxon. We meet it with familiar frequency in the budding talents of France, and it startles and haunts us for an hour. After an hour, however, the mystery is apt to fade, for we find that the wondrous initiation is not in the least general, is only exceedingly special, and is, even with this limitation, very often rather conventional. In a word, it is with the ladies that the young Frenchman takes his ease, and more particularly with the ladies selected expressly to make this attitude convincing. When

they have let him off, the dimnesses too often encompass him. But for Mr. Kipling there are no dimnesses anywhere, and if the ladies are indeed violently distinct they are not only strong notes in a universal loudness. This loudness fills the ears of Mr. Kipling's admirers (it lacks sweetness, no doubt, for those who are not of the number), and there is really only one strain that is absent from it —the voice, as it were, of the civilised man; in whom I of course also include the civilised woman. But this is an element that for the present one does not miss—every other note is so articulate and direct.

It is a part of the satisfaction the author gives us that he can make us speculate as to whether he will be able to complete his picture altogether (this is as far as we presume to go in meddling with the question of his future) without bringing in the complicated soul. On the day he does so, if he handles it with anything like the cleverness he has already shown, the expectation of his friends will take a great bound. Meanwhile, at any rate, we have Mulvaney, and Mulvaney is after all tolerably complicated. He is only a six-foot saturated Irish private, but he is a considerable pledge of more to come. Hasn't he, for that matter, the tongue of a hoarse siren, and hasn't he also mysteries and infinitudes almost Carlylese? Since I am speaking of him I may as well say that, as an evocation, he

has probably led captive those of Mr. Kipling's readers who have most given up resistance. He is a piece of portraiture of the largest, vividest kind, growing and growing on the painter's hands without ever outgrowing them. I can't help regarding him, in a certain sense, as Mr. Kipling's tutelary deity—a landmark in the direction in which it is open to him to look furthest. If the author will only go as far in this direction as Mulvaney is capable of taking him (and the inimitable Irishman is like Voltaire's Habakkuk, *capable de tout*) he may still discover a treasure and find a reward for the services he has rendered the winner of Dinah Shadd. I hasten to add that the truly appreciative reader should surely have no quarrel with the primitive element in Mr. Kipling's subject-matter, or with what, for want of a better name, I may call his love of low life. What is that but essentially a part of his freshness? And for what part of his freshness are we exactly more thankful than for just this smart jostle that he gives the old stupid superstition that the amiability of a story-teller is the amiability of the people he represents—that their vulgarity, or depravity, or gentility, or fatuity are tantamount to the same qualities in the painter itself? A blow from which, apparently, it will not easily recover is dealt this infantine philosophy by Mr. Howells when, with the most distinguished dexterity and all the detachment of a master, he

handles some of the clumsiest, crudest, most human things in life—answering surely thereby the play-goers in the sixpenny gallery who howl at the representative of the villain when he comes before the curtain.

Nothing is more refreshing than this active, disinterested sense of the real; it is doubtless the quality for the want of more of which our English and American fiction has turned so wofully stale. We are ridden by the old conventionalities of type and small proprieties of observance—by the foolish baby-formula (to put it sketchily) of the picture and the subject. Mr. Kipling has all the air of being disposed to lift the whole business off the nursery carpet, and of being perhaps even more able than he is disposed. One must hasten of course to parenthesise that there is not, intrinsically, a bit more luminosity in treating of low life and of primitive man than of those whom civilisation has kneaded to a finer paste: the only luminosity in either case is in the intelligence with which the thing is done. But it so happens that, among ourselves, the frank, capable outlook, when turned upon the vulgar majority, the coarse, receding edges of the social perspective, borrows a charm from being new; such a charm as, for instance, repetition has already despoiled it of among the French—the hapless French who pay the penalty as well as enjoy the glow of living in-

tellectually so much faster than we. It is the most inexorable part of our fate that we grow tired of everything, and of course in due time we may grow tired even of what explorers shall come back to tell us about the great grimy condition, or, with unprecedented items and details, about the gray middle state which darkens into it. But the explorers, bless them! may have a long day before that; it is early to trouble about reactions, so that we must give them the benefit of every presumption. We are thankful for any boldness and any sharp curiosity, and that is why we are thankful for Mr. Kipling's general spirit and for most of his excursions.

Many of these, certainly, are into a region not to be designated as superficially dim, though indeed the author always reminds us that India is above all the land of mystery. A large part of his high spirits, and of ours, comes doubtless from the amusement of such vivid, heterogeneous material, from the irresistible magic of scorching suns, subject empires, uncanny religions, uneasy garrisons and smothered-up women—from heat and colour and danger and dust. India is a portentous image, and we are duly awed by the familiarities it undergoes at Mr. Kipling's hand and by the fine impunity, the sort of fortune that favours the brave, of *his* want of awe. An abject humility is not his strong point, but he gives us something in-

stead of it—vividness and drollery, the vision and the thrill of many things, the misery and strangeness of most, the personal sense of a hundred queer contacts and risks. And then in the absence of respect he has plenty of knowledge, and if knowledge should fail him he would have plenty of invention. Moreover, if invention should ever fail him, he would still have the lyric string and the patriotic chord, on which he plays admirably; so that it may be said he is a man of resources. What he gives us, above all, is the feeling of the English manner and the English blood in conditions they have made at once so much and so little their own; with manifestations grotesque enough in some of his satiric sketches and deeply impressive in some of his anecdotes of individual responsibility.

His Indian impressions divide themselves into three groups, one of which, I think, very much outshines the others. First to be mentioned are the tales of native life, curious glimpses of custom and superstition, dusky matters not beholden of the many, for which the author has a remarkable *flair*. Then comes the social, the Anglo-Indian episode, the study of administrative and military types, and of the wonderful rattling, riding ladies who, at Simla and more desperate stations, look out for husbands and lovers; often, it would seem, and husbands and lovers of others. The most brilliant group is devoted wholly to the common soldier, and

of this series it appears to me that too much good is hardly to be said. Here Mr. Kipling, with all his off-handedness, is a master; for we are held not so much by the greater or less oddity of the particular yarn—sometimes it is scarcely a yarn at all, but something much less artificial—as by the robust attitude of the narrator, who never arranges or glosses or falsifies, but makes straight for the common and the characteristic. I have mentioned the great esteem in which I hold Mulvaney—surely a charming man and one qualified to adorn a higher sphere. Mulvaney is a creation to be proud of, and his two comrades stand as firm on their legs. In spite of Mulvaney's social possibilities, they are all three finished brutes; but it is precisely in the finish that we delight. Whatever Mr. Kipling may relate about them forever will encounter readers equally fascinated and unable fully to justify their faith.

Are not those literary pleasures after all the most intense which are the most perverse and whimsical, and even indefensible? There is a logic in them somewhere, but it often lies below the plummet of criticism. The spell may be weak in a writer who has every reasonable and regular claim, and it may be irresistible in one who presents himself with a style corresponding to a bad hat. A good hat is better than a bad one, but a conjuror may wear either. Many a reader will never be

able to say what secret human force lays its hand upon him when Private Ortheris, having sworn "quietly into the blue sky," goes mad with home-sickness by the yellow river and raves for the basest sights and sounds of London. I can scarcely tell why I think "The Courting of Dinah Shadd" a masterpiece (though, indeed, I can make a shrewd guess at one of the reasons), nor would it be worth while perhaps to attempt to defend the same pretension in regard to "On Greenhow Hill"—much less to trouble the tolerant reader of these remarks with a statement of how many more performances in the nature of "The End of the Passage" (quite admitting even that they might not represent Mr. Kipling at his best) I am conscious of a latent relish for. One might as well admit while one is about it that one has wept profusely over "The Drums of the Fore and Aft," the history of the "Dutch courage" of two dreadful dirty little boys, who, in the face of Afghans scarcely more dreadful, saved the reputation of their regiment and perished, the least mawkishly in the world, in a squalor of battle incomparably expressed. People who know how peaceful they are themselves and have no bloodshed to reproach themselves with needn't scruple to mention the glamour that Mr. Kipling's intense militarism has for them, and how astonishing and contagious they find it, in spite of the unromantic complexion of it

—the way it bristles with all sorts of ugliness and technicalities. Perhaps that is why I go all the way even with "The Gadsbys"—the Gadsbys were so connected (uncomfortably, it is true) with the army. There is fearful fighting—or a fearful danger of it—in "The Man Who Would be King"; is that the reason we are deeply affected by this extraordinary tale? It is one of them, doubtless, for Mr. Kipling has many reasons, after all, on his side, though they don't equally call aloud to be uttered.

One more of them, at any rate, I must add to these unsystematised remarks—it is the one I spoke of a shrewd guess at in alluding to "The Courting of Dinah Shadd." The talent that produces such a tale is a talent eminently in harmony with the short story, and the short story is, on our side of the Channel and of the Atlantic, a mine which will take a great deal of working. Admirable is the clearness with which Mr. Kipling perceives this—perceives what innumerable chances it gives, chances of touching life in a thousand different places, taking it up in innumerable pieces, each a specimen and an illustration. In a word, he appreciates the episode, and there are signs to show that this shrewdness will, in general, have long innings. It will find the detachable, compressible "case" an admirable, flexible form; the cultivation of which may well add to the mistrust already en-

tertained by Mr. Kipling, if his manner does not betray him, for what is clumsy and tasteless in the time-honoured practice of the "plot." It will fortify him in the conviction that the vivid picture has a greater communicative value than the Chinese puzzle. There is little enough "plot" in such a perfect little piece of hard representation as "The End of the Passage," to cite again only the most salient of twenty examples.

But I am speaking of our author's future, which is the luxury that I meant to forbid myself—precisely because the subject is so tempting. There is nothing in the world (for the prophet) so charming as to prophesy, and as there is nothing so inconclusive the tendency should be repressed in proportion as the opportunity is good. There is a certain want of courtesy to a peculiarly contemporaneous present even in speculating, with a dozen differential precautions, on the question of what will become in the later hours of the day of a talent that has got up so early. Mr. Kipling's actual performance is like a tremendous walk before breakfast, making one welcome the idea of the meal, but consider with some alarm the hours still to be traversed. Yet if his breakfast is all to come, the indications are that he will be more active than ever after he has had it. Among these indications are the unflagging character of his pace and the excellent form, as they say in athletic

circles, in which he gets over the ground. We don't detect him stumbling; on the contrary, he steps out quite as briskly as at first, and still more firmly. There is something zealous and craftsman-like in him which shows that he feels both joy and responsibility. A whimsical, wanton reader, haunted by a recollection of all the good things he has seen spoiled; by a sense of the miserable, or, at any rate, the inferior, in so many continuations and endings, is almost capable of perverting poetic justice to the idea that it would be even positively well for so surprising a producer to remain simply the fortunate, suggestive, unconfirmed and unqualified representative of what he has actually done. We can always refer to that.

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